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FLORENCE





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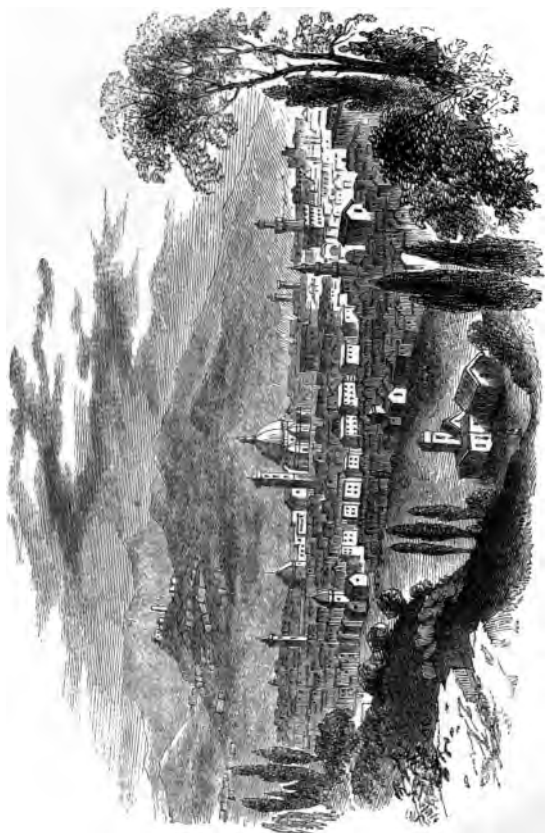






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# FLORENCE.

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## FLORENCE.

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THE original site of most of the ancient Italian cities is to be looked for not in a plain (such as that whereon Florence now stands), but upon the very summit of some steep mountain. During the wild times which witnessed their foundation, war, not only between district and district, but between town and town, was of almost constant occurrence; and thus security from attack became a paramount consideration with all founders of cities. Usually, the terminating cone or loftiest ridge of a hill or mountain was selected; and this, being first surrounded by a ditch and wall, was gradually covered with habitations. As friendly leagues were formed among neighbouring cities, as small separate communities grew into considerable states, and as settled governments—republican or monarchical—



acquired sufficient power to preserve internal tranquillity, the inhabitants of these old towns gradually descended towards the level country, into accessible valleys, and to the banks of rivers. Many of the towns on the hill tops became almost entirely deserted; but several others retained a considerable portion of their population, and are still found peopled; being also partially girded in by their ancient walls and towers. Along the Apennine chain of mountains, which traverses Italy from end to end, these ancient, thinly populated places are frequently seen, looking, at a distance, like eagles' nests.

La Città Madre, the mother of Florence, was Fesulæ, now Fiesole, an Etruscan settlement of the remotest antiquity, whose elevated terraces and walks are visible from most parts of the modern town. It was on that hill-top that our great poet Milton visited the great astronomer and natural philosopher Galileo, and saw him watching the heavens from his observatory. The spot, as we shall show hereafter, still bears witness to the industry and arts of *its original* founders, the Etruscans. This



wonderful people, who gave their name to all this territory and to the neighbouring sea, are one of the greatest of historical mysteries. They almost equalled the Egyptians in the solidity, and surpassed them in the beauty, of their buildings;—they excelled in the arts, and indulged in the luxuries of life, while the Greeks were still barbarians, and Rome had yet no name;—they extended their conquest over almost the whole of Italy, and filled its finest provinces with their cities and population;—ingenious like the Greeks, but owing nothing to them, and being by long ages their precursors, they cultivated sculpture, painting, architecture, and all the arts with passion, and left behind them numberless monuments, of which many yet remain to attest their success;—they delighted and excelled in navigation, colonised the Mediterranean islands, and even attempted to explore the secrets of the Ocean. Yet we know not whence they came, or what course they pursued in their migrations through Italy; nor can we interpret above three words of the language they spoke and wrote. Philology, which has



explained, and is yet explaining so many secrets, comes to a dead halt and silence before the Etruscan inscriptions. Even in the time of Herodotus, the father of history, the origin of this people was a subject of dispute and conjecture. Some suppose them to have been Aborigines, a name given to the inhabitants found in a country by its first recorded invaders. Others, from an imperfect conformity in certain customs, fancy that they were of Egyptian origin. Many represent them as coming originally from the coast of Asia Minor, from Lydia or Mæonia. Still more imagine that they descended from the Pelasgi, a well-known tribe of European Greeks, who were expelled by the then barbarous tribes of the Hellenes, and forced to seek shelter and subsistence first in Lydia (Asia Minor), and afterwards in Italy. Some later writers have thought that they discovered affinities which authorized them to conclude that they were either Phœnicians or Philistines. After a supremacy in Italy, the duration of which cannot be ascertained, they degenerated into effeminacy and weakness. *Their* barbarous but more manly and



intrepid neighbours attacked them on every side, and in process of time stripped them of their most valuable provinces. The Gauls took from them all upper Italy; the Samnites drove them from Campagnia, and all the regions of the south; the Umbri and other Italian nations or tribes fell upon their flank, and dispossessed them of other provinces; so that at the first appearance of the Romans on the theatre of Italy, the Etruscans were confined to the territory which still bears their name (Tuscany), and extends from the Tiber northward to the Apennines, and westward to the sea. It does not appear that they extended their sovereignty to the south of the Tiber, but splendid evidences of their architectural knowledge and skill existed beyond that river, when the people of Romulus began to erect their humble cottages, and hovels of mud, straw, and rushes near the river bank.

Though crushed by the Romans, deprived of their sovereignty, and oppressed and humiliated, these extraordinary people still retained their superiority in the arts, and their civilization obtained a partial conquest over the bar-



barism of their conquerors. They communicated to Rome the skill that erected her temples, the ceremonies that graced her religion, the rolls that invested her magistrates, the pomp that accompanied her triumphs, and even the music that animated her legions. During the supremacy of the Tarquins they constructed those wonderful subterranean vaults and conduits which still drain the city of Rome, and strike the beholder with astonishment. Indeed, they appear to have been employed on every edifice, and on every kind of work that demanded skill and taste. They retained this superiority long after the kingly government of the Tarquins had given place to the stern old Roman republic, and even when the Republic had been succeeded by the imperial dynasty of the Cæsars. Perhaps they may be said never to have entirely lost this superiority; and notwithstanding the succession of so many ages and revolutions, the Tuscans—their successors rather than their descendants—are supposed still to possess a peculiar aptitude both for the fine arts and for the sciences. We do not believe *that* much of the original Etruscan blood can




flow in the veins of these modern Tuscans; but some peculiarity or happy combination of air, soil, water, scenery, and climate, with other influences too subtle for our senses to discover, may have tended to produce the superiority which the Tuscans themselves claim—and not without good show of reason. Favourable natural influences may have acted upon them as upon their mysterious predecessors. Even men of very different races are found to assimilate and to contract the same tastes, habits, and even features, after any prolonged residence in the same regions.

Florence, as the capital of Tuscany, has always assumed a superiority in arts and letters over the other cities, and, although the love of art was common to nearly all of them, her pretension may generally be admitted.

The ancient city owes its origin to a colony of Roman soldiers, sent hither by Octavinus after the victory of Perugia. To these soldiers was allotted part of the territory of the colony of Fiesole (Fesulæ), established about forty years before by the dictator Sulla.



Florence as a city was not very conspicuous under the dominion of Rome; her celebrity commenced after the overthrow of that empire, and nearly all her historical glories belong not to the classical, but to the middle ages. She was rarely mentioned until after the subjugation of Rome by the barbarian invaders, while hardly any remains exist of the period of the Roman empire, either within or near her walls, except some slight relics of an amphitheatre, and a few inscriptions, medals, and coins. Christianity, introduced much earlier, seems to have been almost established at Florence in the third century. Under the persecution of the Church by the Emperor Decius, there were several illustrious Florentine martyrs, whose fate and constancy in death are represented in many of the old paintings which adorn the churches. About the year 405 the town was threatened by the Goths, but was saved by the imperial general Stilichon, who defeated the barbarians in its neighbourhood. In 542, it was attacked by the Goths under Totila, but was successfully defended by a garrison which *the great* general Belisarius had left in it.





Not long afterwards, the Lombard or Longobard invaders occupied Florence, together with the whole of Tuscany, which became one of the grand duchies of that Italic kingdom which they built up by successive conquests in the course of the sixth century. The city was spared as well from the Longobard violence as from the fury of the Goths, who, in some other places, scarcely left one stone upon another. "This fair city," says an old Italian writer, "was indeed much tormented by the Goths, yet was it never destroyed, either by Totila or by any other; so let it not be credited that it was rebuilt, as some pretend, by Charlemagne, and so much the less as Alcuin, his companion and instructor, writing the history of his deeds, only says that this Emperor, on his way to Rome, thrice celebrated the festival of Easter at Florence." Charlemagne, having conquered the Longobards at the beginning of the ninth century, gave a new organization to the various provinces of their kingdom: at Florence he appointed a political chief called Duke, and afterwards Count, under whom were various officers




and administrators who were to be named not by the Count alone, but elected by him and the people together. Thus early was Florence possessed of municipal institutions and a free form of government. We shall presently see how these blessings were abused by intrigue and faction, and the violent hatreds and insane feuds of the people. In the eleventh century, when Italy began to be involved in the long sanguinary quarrel between the Popes of Rome and the Emperors of Germany, Florence with the greater part of Tuscany was under the jurisdiction of the celebrated Countess Matilda. This lady, who died in 1115, bequeathed her territory to the Roman see. From this time the principal cities of Tuscany began to form themselves into independent republics, while the popes, not being strong enough to establish their own rule, and being well satisfied because the various communities did not admit the rule of the emperors, looked with favour on this state of things. Most of these numerous commonwealths were, of course, very small. Florence possessed only a limited territory, *extending a few miles round its walls*. In

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the course of a day, a good pedestrian might have walked through some half-dozen of these diminutive Tuscan republics. But Florence started very early in the career of commerce, being only a century or two behind Venice and Amalfi, and scarcely at all behind Genoa. Her citizens possessed in a wonderful degree the spirit of industry and speculation; they had commercial establishments in the Levant, in France, a little later, in England, and in other parts; they were jewellers and goldsmiths, and in this capacity they became money-changers and money-lenders, and engaged in many transactions which are now carried on separately by bankers. At the beginning of the twelfth century they fought and won a battle against the Imperialists. This was the first military exploit of the community, and from this time Florence was numbered among the towns attached to the popes and opposed to the emperors. Subsequently, the party that adhered to the popes obtained the name of Guelphs, whilst the adherents of the emperors were styled Ghibellines. For a long time these two





factions divided Italy between them, and drenched in blood nearly every corner of that beautiful peninsula.

Although the city of Florence declared itself Guelph, many of its nobles were decided Ghibellines; and as several of these, at various epochs, became citizens of Florence, or connected themselves by marriage with Florentine families, they claimed the right of voting in the affairs of government, and thus the seeds of internal discord were sown within the walls of the city. Moreover, the democratic element, or the numerous popular body, became very changeful and capricious—as such bodies have ever been. Had the Florentines remained steady to one line of politics, they might have attained to peace and tranquillity, at least for some ages; but they shifted and changed, perplexing men's minds and principles. When the Guelphs got the upper hand, they showed little mercy to the Ghibellines, and when these were successful, they retaliated on the Guelphs: the prevalent custom of each faction, when in power, being to drive its opponents into exile, and *confiscate their houses and landed property.*



Bloody combats took place in the streets, and were carried on from palace to palace, from tower to tower: every considerable family had its palace strongly built of stone, and fortified with towers, barbicans, and battlements. According to an old Florentine chronicler, some of these towers were 150 feet in height. Assuredly, at this time (which extended nearly throughout the middle ages), Florence did not merit the reputation for mildness, gentleness, and tranquillity, which she has enjoyed in later ages. Her citizens seem to have been always ready upon any provocation, small or great, to quarrel and take up arms against one another.

In the year 1215, when there had been a lull in the storm, the city was divided into two implacable factions, merely through a family feud. A young man of the house of Buondelmonti, who had been betrothed to a young lady of the Uberti family, broke his faith and married another damsel of the family of Donati. To avenge this insult, the Uberti stabbed the promise-breaker in the street. Forthwith the relatives of the



murdered man prepared for their revenge. The alarum bells were rung. The citizens took part, some with the Uberti, and others with the Buondelmonti and Donati. In the course of this struggle, sometimes one, sometimes the other of the two parties prevailed, when the leaders of the losing faction generally left the town, to return and wreak their vengeance at the first opportunity. The picture drawn by Shakspeare, in *Romeo and Juliet*, of the feud between the Capulets and Montagues, was not in the least exaggerated, and is as applicable to Florence and a score of other Italian cities in the middle ages, as to Verona. Our immortal poet followed popular history and tradition, as they were embodied in the *Novelle* of Bandello, an Italian writer of the sixteenth century. The real names of the two rival families at Verona were *Capuletti* and *Montecchi*.

The Uberti were decided partisans of the Emperor Frederic XI.; the Buondelmonti and Donati espoused the cause of the pope. The majority of the citizens were Guelphs, and their party had obtained the predominance in the town when, in 1250, Frederic XI.



died. The Ghibellines were weakened and dispirited, and the Guelphs greatly encouraged by the demise of this warlike and politic sovereign : the triumphant party sent a force into the Valdarno against the Florentine exiles and emigrants who had gathered there; and then, aiming at conquest and annexation, they attempted the reduction of Pisa, Sienna, and other Tuscan states, which were held by the Ghibelline party. They defeated the Pisans in a battle, and were successful in some of their sieges. They bestowed on this year (1252) the name of "the year of victories." In these contests Florence obtained such a portion of military fame, as placed it upon a level with most of the Italian commonwealths. But by each and all of these little states and subdivisions of a people of the same race, religion and language, war was carried on with a ruthless spirit, and with all the spite and vindictiveness which characterise personal quarrels; at the same time their policy and statecraft were as treacherous, crooked, and remorseless as any that can be imagined. If Florence was not worse than her neigh-



bours, it can hardly be said that she was better.

In 1254, the Guelphs of Florence took Volterra, one of the most distinguished of the cities of the old Etrurians, and that which exhibits the most abundant remains of the ancient Etruscans. About the same time they first coined their golden florins, considered the finest coin in all Europe, weighing a drachm, and bearing the impression of John the Baptist, the patron of Florence, and a lily, the device of the city. They also remodelled their internal government, which was almost constantly undergoing some change, as the aristocratic or the democratic element prevailed. They were accused by their contemporaries of over-refining and subtilizing in home politics, and of making such very clever, artful constitutions, that they themselves, after a few months, could not understand them. By the present change the power of the state was delegated to a council of twelve, called Anziani, or Elders; but over this council were placed a Podestà to administer justice, *and a captain* of the people, or commander of



the militia. These two great officers were not to be Florentines, but natives of some other city with which Florence had no political connexion. They were to be renewed every two years. It was at this period a common custom of the Italian republics to choose their Podestà from among strangers, to avoid the risk of partiality arising from connexion and friendship; but this prudential measure could not exclude the corrupting influence of bribery and intrigue. Most of these exotic chiefs in Florence were, in fact, as prone to cabal and faction, favouritism and corruption, as if they had been native Florentines. The judgments and decisions of the civil Podestà were without appeal.

Manfred, the warlike king of Naples, now put himself forward as the Ghibelline champion in Italy. He supported the Florentine exiles of that party, who had gathered at Sienna with the hope of driving the Guelphs out of Florence, recovering their property and honours, and establishing their own supremacy in that city and state. As usual, in the face of this display of force, there was a great number of very sudden political con-



versions, the Guelph of yesterday becoming an ardent Ghibelline to-day. Under the able leading of Farinata degli Uberti, the Ghibellines assembled at Sienna marched out and surprised the Florentines and other Guelphs of Tuscany at Monteperto, near the banks of the river Arbia, a few miles from Sienna. This was on the 4th September, 1260. One of the most terrible of all these battles ensued, and ended in the total defeat of the Guelphs, who are said to have lost 10,000 men in killed, and a great number as prisoners. The amount of the slain is probably exaggerated, but it is quite certain that there was a prodigious slaughter at Monteperto, as also that nearly every hill and valley in these fair and peaceful-looking regions were drenched in Italian blood shed by Italians. An eloquent and passionate modern writer, who has done honour to Italy by his genius and his learning, exclaims, "I have explored all Tuscany. All its mountains and all its fields are memorable through the fraternal battles of four centuries ago; the bodies of an infinitude of Italians here killed have served as founda-



tions to the thrones of emperors and popes. I ascended the heights of Monteperto, still infamous with the memory of the slaughter of the Guelphs. The day had scarcely begun to dawn; and in that sad silence, and in that cold obscurity, with my heart full of the ancient misfortunes of my country, I shuddered, and my hair stood on end. I called aloud upon the dead, and it seemed as if I saw, ascending and descending the steep sides of the mountain, the shades of all those old Tuscans who had fallen here, with swords and garments wet with blood!"\*

Farinata and the victorious Ghibellines entered Florence in triumph; the principal Guelphs who survived the slaughter of Monteperto, fled across the mountains to Lucca, their property was confiscated, their houses levelled with the ground, and a new government was formed from among the Ghibelline party, who took the oath of allegiance to King Manfred. Shortly after these occurrences, a congress or general diet of the Ghibelline cities was held at Empoli, a few miles from Florence. Here hatred

\* Ugo Foscolo, *Ultime Lettere di Jacopo Ortis*.



and revenge, those prevalent Italian passions, raged in all their violence, and it was earnestly and solemnly proposed to raze Florence to the earth, and distribute its inhabitants among other towns of Tuscany, as the bulk of the population was incurably Guelph, and not to be trusted or tolerated. But Farinata, the victor of Monteaperto, indignantly resisted the proposal, saying he would rather join the Guelphs than see the fair city of his birth thus destroyed. The threat had its effect, and Florence was saved.

But this Ghibelline triumph did not last long. The pope called to his aid from France Charles of Anjou ; and that ambitious, war-like, and ferocious conqueror descended through the passes of the Alps with a formidable army. In 1265 Charles overran the Neapolitan kingdom ; and the defeat and death of Manfred, in the terrible battle of Benevento, completely turned the scale against the Ghibellines. The Florentine Guelphs expelled their countrymen of the opposite faction, drove away the garrison left by Manfred, and tendered their alle-



giance for ten years to Charles of Anjou, now king of Naples, who sent Guy de Montfort as his vicar with 800 French cavalry, and a body of Italian infantry. The Florentines again changed their constitution; but there continued to be much confusion between the legislative and judicial powers here as in all the Italian cities, and the laws and customs were generally so contradictory, so barbarous or absurd, that there was little security for person or property. Yet even under this state of things, Florence, at every return of peace, presented an outward appearance of comfort and prosperity. Unhappily, peace was never of long duration in these ages.

In 1268, three years after the battle of Benevento, in which King Manfred was slain, the expedition into Italy of Conradin, a prince of the imperial line of Suabia, again gave a momentary preponderance to the Ghibellines; but Conradin was defeated and barbarously put to death on a scaffold in the market-place of Naples, the Guelphs raised their heads everywhere, and the Ghibellines were once more expelled from Florence. But for the tremendous amount of human



woe and suffering involved in them, these frequent revolutions, and shiftings, and changings, would be absolutely ridiculous. The popes could not chain up the fiend they had themselves let loose: some of the best of them often tried in vain to tranquillize the Guelphs, and reconcile the two factions. That which most surprises us in this interminable quarrel is, that it was perpetuated by the antipathies and passions of the common people, rather than by the gentry and nobility. The members of the aristocracy might have much to gain or lose, and they had the means of understanding the grounds of the quarrel; but the great bulk of the people were ignorant of the rights of the cause for which they contended, and had little or nothing either to hope or fear in the shape of fortune or station. Yet, for a very long season, among the poor, uninformed labouring classes, Guelph hardly met Ghibelline, or Ghibelline Guelph, without coming to blows or to a drawing of daggers.

In 1273, by the mediation of the pope, peace was made between the two factions, and the Ghibellines were recalled from exile.



Intermarriages took place between the families of some of the party leaders, and great feasts were given to commemorate the happy union and blessed concord: but this harmony did not last long. In 1280, the legate of Pope Nicholas III. made a new peace: the more violent Ghibellines were banished for a time, but their property was restored to them, and some of the more moderate men of their party were allowed to share in the offices of state and government. This soon excited the jealousy and fury of the Guelphs, who, knowing themselves to be the stronger party, broke the Legate's treaty and all the promises they had made. Then followed thirty years of fierce dissension and internal feud, occasionally varied by wars with Arezzo and other neighbouring cities. At the battle of Campaldino, much celebrated in Florentine chronicle and history, the poet Dante charged with the Florentine cavalry, and the people of Arezzo were defeated with great slaughter. More changes were made in the constitution, and it was decreed that all those families who bore titles of nobility, whether Guelphs or Ghibellines, should be for



ever excluded from the higher offices of state. These families, called the Great (Gli Grandi), were only thirty-three in number, and mostly of the Guelph party, since the chief Ghibelline families had been previously exiled. As if there were not already sufficient materials for discord within the walls of Florence, new elements of bitterness were introduced from the Tuscan city and independent state of Pistoja, where an unhappy quarrel between two powerful families had led to the formation of two political factions, whose animosities, being of fresher date, seem to have surpassed those of the Guelphs and Ghibellines. With the intention of composing their differences, the principals on each side were summoned from Pistoja to Florence; but this measure, instead of remedying the evil, only contributed to increase its virulence and extent, by communicating it to the citizens of Florence themselves: for the contending parties were so far from being brought to a reconciliation, that each contrived to gain partisans among the Florentines, with whom many of them were previously connected by the ties of relationship



or by friendship. These impetuous men entered into the Pistoja dispute with such acrimony and eagerness, that the whole city was soon engaged either on one side or on the other.

The two factions were now known by the names of Neri and Bianchi (the blacks and whites). Generally, the Neri sided with the Guelphs, or partisans of the papal power, and the Bianchi with the Ghibellines; but neither faction appears to have been very steady or consistent. Brothers were arrayed against brothers, and even sons against their own fathers; the sympathies of blood, the sweet domestic charities, and the holy injunctions of the Evangelists being suspended or disregarded by all classes of the community. It is astonishing, how, in the midst of all this discord, violence, and bloodshed, society could exist, or avoid a relapse into barbarism; yet the citizens of Florence were kept together, and instead of falling into barbarism they laid, at this very period, the foundations of their loftiest civilization, cultivating both arts and letters with ardour and success. Cimabue, Giotto, Memmi, the fathers of Italian painting, Ricordano Mala-



spina, the Florentine annalist, Guido dalle Colonna, Brunetto Latini, Guittone d'Arezzo, the poet, Guido Cavalcanti, Dino Compagni, the immortal Dante, (the greatest of all bards after Homer and Shakspeare,) and several other eminent writers, who among them




PETRARCA'S TOMB.

may be said to have made the beautiful language in which they wrote, and which is still the native tongue of Italy, all flourished in this period of intestine trouble and woe; while both Petrarcha and Boccaccio were



born in it, the one in the year 1304, the other in 1313. Petrarca was born, and Dante died, in exile. Such entries in the old chronicles as these, convey a melancholy impression,—“The great Francesco Petrarca, son of a Florentine exile, first saw the light of day in this world of troubles, at Arezzo, and died far away from Florence, and was buried in Arguà, near unto Padua, among the Euganean hills. Dante was indeed born in Florence, but he died a long-banished man at Ravenna.”—And all this through party spirit, and the insane, vindictive, implacable, blind hate of Italian faction! Sculpture and architecture kept pace with painting: in this stormy period, churches and other noble structures were erected to stand for hundreds of years, and to serve as models or lessons for artists of later ages. The eagerness with which the Florentines would quit the forum or scene of political controversy, and even the field selected for an armed contest, to run and gaze, enraptured, at a new picture by Cimabue or Giotto, surely proves that this people possessed a rare susceptibility to art. It must, however, be admitted, that the same





refinement of feeling, the same delicate susceptibility to the influences of the beautiful, was common to the Italian people, whether they lived in turbulent little republics, as at Florence; under a priesthood, as at Rome; or under a king, as at Naples. While Cimabue was finishing his great picture of the Madonna and Infant Christ, for the church of Santa Maria Novella, Charles of Anjou, the ferocious champion of the Guelph party, arrived in the city of Florence, and was received and feasted by the nobles and citizens of the Guelph faction. As one of the greatest treats they could give him, they conducted Charles to the studio or painting-room of Cimabue, which was in a garden near the city gate called Porta San Piero. The chronicler has not recorded the impression produced on the fierce prince, who had not been born under an Italian sky, and who was thinking only of war and conquest; but the Florentine mob repaired to the spot in joyous companies, and when the picture was uncovered, they rent the air with shouts and exclamations of astonishment, delight, and *joy*, whence this quarter of the city has



obtained and has ever since kept the name of "Allegro," or joyous. The political atmosphere of Tuscany was dark and troubled when this picture was finished, yet it was carried in great pomp to the church for which it was destined, being accompanied by the magnates and magistrates of the city, by music, and by crowds of the common people in solemn and festive procession. The painting which thus excited enthusiasm in the minds of a whole people six hundred years ago is still to be seen, where Cimabue placed it, in the church of Santa Maria Novella. When his pupil Giotto died, in days not a whit more tranquil, Guelphs and Ghibellines, the Black faction and the White, seemed for the moment to forget their animosities, and to unite in deploring the event as a national loss, and in rendering to his memory all possible honours.

After a time, the Bianchi were all banished, and the Florentines laid siege to Pistoja, whence this new feud had originally proceeded. This siege, like all the military operations of the period, was attended with circumstances of the greatest atrocity. It




ended, in the year 1306, in Pistoja being reduced by famine. Nine years after this the Florentines contemplated the conquest of Pisa, but the Ghibellines of that republic gave them a complete defeat at Monte Catini, and threatened in their turn to lay siege to Florence. Calamities still thickened. In 1325, ten years after the battle of Monte Catini, the Florentines were again defeated in a pitched battle at Altopascio. This time their adversaries the Ghibellines were commanded by the celebrated Castruccio Castracani, lord of Lucca, who took Pistoja and advanced to within a mile of the walls of Florence. Had the martial bishop of Arezzo kept his promise and joined him with his forces, Castracani would have taken the town and have expelled the Guelphs. But the bishop failed, and the Florentines received timely assistance from the Anjou king of Naples. Hereupon the disappointed Ghibellines, acting as Italian politicians have ever done, called in foreign aid. The emperor Ludovic V. descended in person into Italy to support Castruccio Castracani; but the death of this chief, in 1328, proved an



irreparable loss to the Ghibellines. While the Florentines were threatened by Castruccio, one of their principal mercantile houses failed for the then enormous sum of 400,000 golden florins, which added greatly to their distress. Some years after this two more commercial houses failed, in consequence, it is stated, of the loss of 1,365,000 golden florins, being the capital and interest of sums which they had advanced to Edward III. of England, and which that warlike sovereign was unable to repay. These facts do indeed give an insight into the sources of the extraordinary wealth and means of the Florentines. Those sources were twofold; the numerous manufactures at home, and the trade and banking operations carried on by their merchants abroad, in nearly every country in Europe and in some regions of Asia. Among the most important manufactures were those of woollens, silks, velvets, and jewellery. Their goldsmiths and silversmiths were also highly celebrated, being in many instances entitled to the epithet of artists rather than to that of artisans or manufacturers.



Ever since the year 1266, the citizens had been enrolled in twelve companies, or Guilds of trades and professions, styled *Arti*. Of these, seven were termed *Arti Maggiori*, or higher Guilds, namely :—1, lawyers and attorneys; 2, importers and dealers in foreign commodities; 3, bankers and money-changers; 4, woollen-manufacturers and drapers; 5, physicians and apothecaries; 6, silk-manufacturers and mercers; 7, furriers. The *Arti Minori*, or lower trades, were—1, retailers of cloth; 2, smiths; 3, shoemakers; 4, butchers; 5, carpenters and masons; but two other trades were afterwards added, which raised the total number of the *Arti* to fourteen. Every citizen who aspired to office was required to inscribe his name on the rolls of one of the Guilds, or trades. Unless he were an admitted member of one of them, he was not eligible to office. It did not follow that a citizen was bound to carry on the trade in whose guild he was inscribed. The poet Dante, before his exile, had his name on the roll of the apothecaries, although it is certain he never exercised that profession.





Before the close of the fourteenth century, the Florentines lost much of their military habits and taste for actual warfare: their armies became chiefly composed of mercenaries, who sold their services to the best paymasters, and were commanded by their own Condottieri, or leaders, by whom the republic was often badly served, and not unfrequently betrayed. These Condottieri and their bands were mostly from other parts of Italy, but they frequently included a great number of foreigners from beyond the Alps. After the French wars with our Edward III. and the Black Prince, there were English soldiers of fortune among them, and by far the most celebrated of all their leaders was an Englishman, Sir John Hawkwood, who had served under the Black Prince. He possessed a remarkable military genius, as may be seen by many of his recorded exploits; and most of all by the memorable retreat he conducted in the year 1391, from the neighbourhood of Milan to Padua, through a most difficult country, across three large and rapid rivers, innumerable streams, and a vast inundated plain, intersected by numerous deep



trenches. The enemy had destroyed the dykes of the river Adige, in the hope of drowning the invader, or of starving him into submission. The inundation gained ground every hour; as far as the eye could reach all was water; provisions began to fail; and Del Verme, the Milanese general, who with his troops occupied what seemed the only outlet, sent Hawkwood the enigmatical present of a fox in a cage. The Englishman received the gift, and requested the messenger to tell his general that the fox seemed nothing daunted, and probably knew very well that he should find a way to get out. "It is generally confessed," says the old Italian writer Poggio, "that no other captain, except Hawkwood, whose sayings and doings deserve to be commemorated among the subtleties of ancient generals and orators, could have overcome the difficulties and dangers in which the Florentine army was then involved." If this favoured knight of the Black Prince had been ambitious of carving out for himself a little independent principality (as many of the Condottieri did), he might assuredly have *succeeded*, for his wit, valour, and strate-




getical skill were great, and the reputation and renown of them still greater; but he contented himself with acting as general to the capricious and not always very generous republic, and he appears, on the whole, to have served it with remarkable fidelity. He was the honestest, as well as the bravest and ablest of the Condottieri.

Still intent on the subjugation of the republic of Pisa, which was formerly one of the greatest and richest of the Italian states, but which had been greatly weakened by a long, destructive, and unfortunate war with the republic of Genoa, the Florentines again took the field and descended the valley of the Arno, towards the walls of the city of Pisa. They were completely defeated, and so weakened, disorganized, and disheartened, that they applied to Robert, king of Naples, for succour, and thus risked their own independence. King Robert sent them Walter of Brienne, an officer of French extraction, but born in Greece, who bore the lofty title of Duke of Athens, and who hoped soon to be Duke of Florence—which city has well merited the name of “the modern Athens.”

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His ambitious aspirations were favoured by the temper of the citizens. Many of these, weary of rash wars and constant civil feuds, contrived to have him elected by acclamation Lord of Florence for life. This was in 1342. The reign of the French Athenian did not last a year. He began by putting to death, or sending into exile, a number of citizens of the wealthier popular families, who had till now kept the government in their own hands. Having a foreign force of Frenchmen and Neapolitans to do his will, and impose awe on the people, his sentences were summarily executed. His rapacity was equal to his cruelty: in the course of ten months he remitted to Naples 400,000 golden florins. On the 26th of July, 1343, he convoked an assembly of distinguished citizens to consult with him on affairs of state. It had been previously rumoured that his real intention was to put to death all who attended the meeting; but of this some doubt may be entertained. The mass of the inhabitants, who had been previously prepared for insurrection, rushed to the palace at the shout of "Popolo! popolo!" (People!





the people!) dispersed the Duke's foreign cavalry, surrounded the palace, which possessed the strength of a fortress, and blockaded him there. At the end of a week he was obliged to capitulate to the leaders of the people. His life would have fallen a sacrifice to the popular rage, but the Bishop of Florence mercifully interfered, and caused the Duke and his adherents to be safely conveyed out of the territories of the republic. This expulsion, called "*la Cacciata del Duca d'Atene*," is still solemnised at Florence every 26th of July, by a festival, a procession, and a grand display of the distinctive flags and banners of all the *Arti*, or trades.

In this recovery of independence, the *Grandi* or ancient nobles had co-operated with the people; and after the restoration of tranquillity, it was agreed that the law of exclusion should be repealed, and that they should be allowed to have a share in the government, and hold offices of state. But the democratic party, grudging them this share of authority, soon rose against them, and drove them out of the Palace of Government. The nobles, calling out their depend-



ants and partisans, renewed the struggle in the street, where a fierce battle was fought. The people gained the day, drove out their adversaries, and plundered their houses. More property was destroyed than was stolen; many curious objects of art or antiquity disappeared, and some of the houses were savagely burned by the triumphant party. This was the last struggle of the old Florentine aristocracy. But internal peace was not secured by their expulsion, nor can it be said that the event was followed by any increase of liberty or popular privileges. In fact, the common people appear to have been the first to regret the overthrow of the old families. In a very few years, a new contest originated in the jealousies and quarrels of two wealthy citizen families, the Albizzi and the Ricci, and the city was again divided into two hostile parties, neither of which ever displayed the healing virtue of moderation. Money, not valour, decided the contest. The Albizzi, who could spend more than the Ricci, predominated; and after exiling a number of citizens of the opposite faction,



they formed a government composed entirely of what were styled *popolani grassi*, fat or rich men of the people. These popolani, or plebeian, moneyed patriots, were very soon accused of being more proud, less liberal, and far more oppressive than the ancient nobles; and the democratic leaders, who had obtained no share in the offices of government, were at every moment ready for another revolution. By this time the great trading and banking family of the Medici had attained to enormous wealth, and had, in several of its members, already given proof of rare ability, taste, and munificence. Uniting with the Ricci, who had so recently been vanquished, and with the lower Arti or trades, who complained of being overlooked, the Medici felt themselves sufficiently powerful to remodel the republic. In 1378, Florence was once more in open insurrection. The Palace of Government was forced, the archives were burnt; and after three days of anarchy, the people elected a woolcomber, Michele Lando, as chief magistrate or supreme head of the state. Contented with the change which deprived the



Albizzi of their excessive power, the Medici showed no eagerness to grasp the reins of government themselves, but they assisted Lando, a man of natural good sense and of commendable moderation, in re-establishing order and tranquillity. But these capricious, turbulent republicans, whom their great countryman Dante reproaches with being the most changeful of mankind, could rarely submit to any government, or to any class or description of rulers for two consecutive years. Numerous troubles broke out, and in 1382 the Albizzi recovered their power and formed a new aristocracy or oligarchy, which, though frequently beset by plots, conspiracies, tumults, and insurrections, succeeded in keeping their seats until the year 1400. From that year down to 1433, the city remained quiet,—and this was the longest period of tranquillity that Florence had ever known. The state was remarkably fortunate in its external politics; its two most formidable enemies, Gian Galeazzo Visconti, duke of Milan, and Ladislaus, king of Naples, being carried off—the duke by the plague, and the king by another con-




tagion—just as they were threatening Florence with siege and destruction. It was not without reason that Machiavelli said, that the best ally of the Florentines in their urgent distresses was—Death. This ally had saved them from the terrible Castruccio Castracani, and from the tyrannical duke of Calabria, and at the most opportune moments had cleared away from their path other dangerous foes.

No state could well be more ambitious, or more eager to aggrandize itself at the expense of its neighbours, than this little republic, whether under an oligarchy or under a democracy. In part by force and fraud, and in part by purchase, the Florentines obtained possession of Cortona, Arezzo, Livorno (Leghorn), some towns in Romagna, and lastly of Pisa, which, after repeated sieges, they took through famine and treachery, on the 14th of October, 1406. On this occasion, the Florentines behaved with rare humanity, and even with generosity, in order to reconcile the Pisans to their rule; but, though living so near, and being in all essentials the very same people, the Pisana



hated the Florentines with inveterate and intense hatred. Many of the principal families emigrated to Lucca, Sardinia, and Sicily; the young men enlisted in the free companies of the various Condottieri; of those who remained behind, too many engaged in plots and conspiracies, which produced no other result than the ruin of those who were concerned in them. The trade of the place, which for many years had been rapidly on the decline, was transferred to Florence and Leghorn; and Pisa, though it remained a beautiful city, rich in palaces, and churches, and other edifices, lost much of its prosperity and population. It had been as factious and turbulent as Florence; yet here, as there, magnificent and stupendous works, which still strike us with admiration and awe, had risen in the midst of all that contention and disorder.

By their superior talents, application to business, and great and constantly increasing wealth, the Medici family imperceptibly acquired the control of nearly all state affairs. Cosmo, the best of the race, took an active part in all public business, and by means of






the family resources conferred immense benefits on the city of Florence, as well as on other regions of the republic. He assumed no title, and his authority consisted rather in influence than in any definite power. Yet, with all his prudence and moderation, he could not avoid incurring the jealousies of the Florentines. In 1433, when a fierce war against the neighbouring republic of Lucca had terminated unfavourably, he was suddenly seized and thrown into prison. He was soon afterwards banished for ten years, and several of his family and a large number of the friends of the Medici were treated in the same harsh manner. Within a year, however, the inimical faction was overthrown, Cosmo was recalled, and returned to Florence amidst the acclamations of the people, who had so recently rejoiced at his expulsion. The subsequent life of Cosmo was almost an uninterrupted course of prosperity. The tranquillity enjoyed by the republic enabled him to indulge his taste for the promotion of the arts, science, and literature. Though still only a private citizen, he surpassed nearly all the sovereign princes of Europe



by his munificent patronage of learning; and to him Florence is indebted for many of those treasures and establishments which render her so attractive a city to all who love arts and letters. He assembled round him some of the most learned men of the age; careless of the expense such objects entailed, he collected Greek, Latin, Oriental and Italian manuscripts, together with statues and pictures; and he called round him the best of those native painters who shed such glory over the revival of the arts in Italy. He endowed numerous religious houses at home, and even built an hospital at Jerusalem for the relief of distressed pilgrims. He carefully avoided all appearance of pomp or state which might excite jealousy; and, in order to increase his interest among them, he confined the marriages of his children to Florentine families. Cosmo acquired and really merited the title of *PATER PATRIÆ*; he died in 1464, and was succeeded in his fortune and authority at Florence by his son Piero. Against this new chief a conspiracy was speedily formed. One of the conspirators revealed the plot, and Piero had just time to escape





from the country residence, where they had intended to seize and dispatch him. He soon reached the city, and placed himself at the head of a select troop of his friends. The baffled conspirators saved themselves by flight; and though, being aided by the Venetians, they afterwards made a stand, they were finally driven out of Tuscany. Piero died in 1469, leaving two sons and two daughters. His property was inherited by the sons; but Lorenzo, the elder of the two, succeeded him as chief of the republic, and subsequently obtained the merited title of "Lorenzo the Magnificent." His government was disturbed by a revolt of the inhabitants of Volterra, on account of a dispute with the Florentine republic. By the recommendation of Lorenzo force was used, and the result was the deplorable sack of Volterra. In 1472 he re-established the University of Pisa, selecting the most eminent professors, and contributing a very large sum from his private fortune. Whilst Lorenzo was dividing his time between the administration of the state and the promotion of literature, the Pazzi, a numerous, powerful,



and distinguished family in Florence, formed a conspiracy to assassinate him and his brother Giuliano, and seize upon the government. Giuliano was savagely slaughtered in the Duomo or cathedral church, at the hour of high mass, but Lorenzo escaped. The people, who were now generally much attached to the Medici, rose in arms, and put to death or apprehended the assassins and those who had set them on. Salviati, archbishop of Pisa, who had been at the head of the conspiracy, was hanged through one of the windows of the old Palace of Government, not being even allowed to divest himself of his archiepiscopal robes; while Jacopo de' Pazzi, the head of that house, with one of his nephews, was summarily executed on the same spot, and in the same manner. The reigning pontiff, Sixtus IV., who is proved, beyond a doubt, to have been a party to this black conspiracy, excommunicated Lorenzo and the magistrates of Florence, laid an interdict on the city and the whole of its territory, formed a league with the king of Naples, and invaded the Florentine dominions. Lorenzo



eloquently appealed to all the surrounding potentates, and set forth to the people of Tuscany the facts of the case, and the grounds which could justify even the hanging of an archbishop. He was zealously supported by his fellow-citizens, and by the inhabitants of most of the towns in Tuscany. He displayed military as well as political ability. After sustaining two campaigns, he, at the close of 1479, took the bold resolution of paying a visit to the king of Naples, in order to detach him from the league with Rome, and, without obtaining or waiting for any safe-conduct or promise of security, trusted himself to the mercy and generosity of his enemy. The result of this confidence and of a few interviews was a treaty of mutual defence and friendship between the king of Naples and Florence. Hereupon Sixtus IV. consented to a peace, and the death of that pontiff soon freed Lorenzo from an implacable and dangerous enemy. In the new pope, Innocent VIII., the Florentines found a friend, and the king of Naples an enemy; for Innocent fostered an extensive conspiracy organized by the Neapolitan barons.



and joined the conspirators. Lorenzo now secured to the republic of Florence a degree of prosperity and tranquillity which it had scarcely ever known before; and by procuring the institution of a deliberative body which formed a senate, or upper house, he corrected the too democratical part of its constitution. Had the Florentines been wise enough to adhere to this form of government, and to the lessons of political wisdom and moderation which their great chief taught them, their republic might long have survived, even in spite of the French invasion, and the wasting wars which shortly after this period threw the whole of Italy into confusion and woe.

The magnificence of Lorenzo was chiefly displayed in public works, and in enriching Florence with books and works of art. He was himself one of the most accomplished scholars and elegant poets of the day, besides being the personal friend and generous benefactor of many poets and learned men, whose writings yet shed a lustre upon his name and age. He employed scholars in different parts of Italy to collect books and antiquities,



and several times despatched his intimate friend Politian (one of the literary celebrities of the period) on long journeys, to discover and purchase the valuable remains of antiquity. Twice he sent the Greek scholar Lascaris into the East, and the result was the acquisition of a great number of manuscripts, 200 of which were procured from one of those Greek monasteries on Mount Athos, which have recently been visited and so admirably described by our own countryman, Mr. Curzon, who would have found more MSS. to buy if Lascaris had not been there nearly 400 years before him. Most unhappily for Florence, the truly magnificent Lorenzo was not destined to enjoy a long life; he sank under a slow fever, and expired on the 8th of April, 1492, in the forty-fourth year of his age. He left three sons and four daughters. Piero, the eldest son, succeeded him as chief of the republic. Giovanni, the second son, after many reverses and family misfortunes, obtained the Popedom under the title of Leo X.; and Giuliano, the third son, having allied himself by marriage to the royal family of France, became duke of Nemours.



Piero soon gave mournful proof of his unwise ambition, and imbecile policy. Not content with being what his father and his grandfather Cosmo had been, he aimed at the possession of sovereign power; and to obtain his end, he formed an intimate connexion with the pope and the king of Naples. He had, however, no steadiness of purpose, and little or none of the moral courage which had carried his father through all his difficulties.

When the French, under Charles VIII., burst into Italy, he shamefully deserted the pope, the king of Naples, and his other Italian allies, whose first grand object was to drive the French back to the other side of the Alps. It must, however, be admitted that the Florentines, who had become very unwarlike, were thrown into great consternation by the near approach of Charles VIII.; that they were only eager for present safety, to be obtained by concessions; and that they shamefully neglected to raise troops and supplies sufficient for the defence of their commonwealth. As soon as the French king reached the confines of the Florentine *state*, Piero had a secret interview with him,



in which he was lavish in his offers to promote the interest of that sovereign. As a pledge of his fidelity, he surrendered to Charles the important fortress of Sarzana, and the cities of Pisa and Leghorn, Charles undertaking to restore these places so soon as he should have achieved the conquest of the kingdom of Naples, and at the same time agreeing to promote the political schemes of Piero. On his return to Florence, after this disgraceful compromise, Piero was refused admittance into the Palace of Government, and was soon compelled, by the indignation of the people, to flee from his native city and seek refuge in Venice. The disgraceful compromise did not save Florence from the French occupation, or from excesses, riots, and spoliation. The palace of the Medici was plundered, and the invaluable library there collected was dispersed. The French began these deeds, but the Florentine rabble followed up the example, carrying off whatever they could discover that was rare or valuable, as paintings, statues, vases, cameos, and gems. The rich accumulations of half a century, the treasures which the



Medici had purchased at an enormous cost, were destroyed or dispersed in a single day. As soon as they recovered their former ascendancy, the heads of this great family, aided by Leo X., began to collect again what had been so barbarously dispersed; they succeeded in recovering most of these precious objects, but there was no restoring those portions of them which had been brutally destroyed. From the day of his flight from Florence, the history of Piero was but one continual succession of mortifications and disappointments. Like the rest of his family, he was poetical, and he deplored in a sonnet his hard fate in being made merely the sport and plaything of fortune.

In the year 1504, when Italy was invaded by Louis XII., Piero entered into the service of the French, and was present at the engagement in which they were defeated with great loss upon the banks of the Liris or Garigliano, by the Spaniards under the great Captain Gonsalvo de Cordova. In the retreat he embarked on board a galley with many persons of rank, intending to convey to Gaeta *four heavy pieces of artillery*, which he had



prevented from falling into the hands of the conquerors. The weight of these pieces, and probably the great number of passengers, caused the boat to founder ; and it was not until several days afterwards that the body of Piero was recovered from the stream. According to another account, Piero perished in much the same way in the port of Gaeta, within sight of his wife, who was eagerly waiting his arrival on the shore. With all his faults, he passed for an accomplished and even learned person. In the year 1552 Cosmo de' Medici, then Grand Duke and absolute sovereign of Tuscany, erected to the memory of his unfortunate kinsman a splendid monument in the great Benedictine abbey of Monte Cassino, which majestically crowns a hill near the right bank of the Garigliano.

For a considerable time Florence was scandalously misgoverned by a wild democratic Junta, headed by the famous or notorious Girolamo Savonarola, an insane monk, who started as a religious and moral reformer, pretending to the gift of prophecy, and who ended in being put to death, and having his



body burned to ashes, and cast into the river Arno by the Florentine people, whom he had so long misled. Every attempt made by the Medici to recover their position at Florence signally failed, until the elevation of Leo X. to the pontificate. This great event occurred in the year 1513. The Florentines, still distracted by internal troubles and commotions, applied to the new pope, as to a countryman and friend, for advice and assistance. Leo, with admirable policy and patience, reconciled their factions, obtained the pardon of some conspirators whom the state would have put to death, and contracted the most friendly relations with the Soderini, and other great Florentine families. Several members of the Medici family were allowed to return to Florence, and quietly repossess themselves of their palaces and estates. He concluded a marriage between his nephew Lorenzo, whom he had made sovereign duke of Urbino, and Madelaine de la Tour, daughter of John, count of Boulogne and Auvergne, and related through her mother to the royal family of France. This illustrious connexion was afterwards extended,

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and Catherine de' Medici became queen of France, and really ruled the French nation in spite of the bar interposed by the Salic law. The inconstant citizens of Florence rejoiced at the restoration of the Medici, and at every accession to their fame and fortune. That family never lost the affections of the populace. The cry of "*Palle! palle!*" (their armorial distinction,) would at any time—even when their fortunes were low—collect a crowd of ardent partisans. The word *Palle* means simply balls. The Medici bore three balls as their crest, and hence, by curious transmission, we have the three gilded balls over our pawnbrokers' shops. The first money-changers and money-lenders in the city of London were Genoese, Florentines, and Lombards. The name of the last is preserved in our Lombard-street—now a street of bankers.

Like the rest of the Italians, the Florentines had become heartily weary of their turbulent liberty and ever-changing republics. But, correctly speaking, there was never any liberty in these republics, except on the side of the victorious, dominant faction. Not



one of these little states ever learned the mercy due to a vanquished party, or extended any consideration to the interests and feelings of a minority. With them every minority was to be rooted out of the land by capital executions, by horrible imprisonments which shortened life, by confiscation, and wholesale sentences of exile. One by one nearly all the Italian cities had thrown up in disgust their republican institutions, and had willingly placed themselves under the rule of a prince or sovereign lord, preferring tranquillity to such independence as they had formerly possessed. All around, in Lombardy and Romagna, the lamp of liberty had been extinguished in blood; and people were content to obey one ruler, one independent, absolute master. The republic which preserved longest and with the greatest purity its democratic institutions was Florence; but this city now followed the general rule, and it was with the acclamations of the people and the unconstrained concurrence of all classes, that Cosmo de' Medici, in the year 1530, was raised to the throne as grand duke.

At first, the title was Duke of Florence,




but it was changed into that of Grand Duke of Tuscany. This ducal dynasty lasted 207 years. Cosmo I. and several of his successors were excellent princes. The love of art and literature seems never to have abandoned the family. But vice and tyranny crept in upon them; the race became degenerate; it lost the energetic qualities to which it owed its greatness and illustrious reputation; and it terminated in the male line, in the person of the poor, effeminate Gaston, who appears to have been little better than an idiot. On his demise, in 1737, Tuscany fell to a grand duke of the Austrian family, a gentle and worthy ruler, who left excellent successors behind him. It may be doubted whether any part of Europe has enjoyed more tranquillity and happiness than has fallen to the share of Florence and the rest of Tuscany, under the truly paternal government of these princes of the Austrian line. Agriculture and commerce were greatly improved; Leghorn, from a little unhealthy town in a boggy country, was raised to the dignity of a great seaport and Porto Franco, and made the emporium of a vast trade. Florence was embellished, fine



roads were completed, and encouragement was given to all the arts which adorn and refine life. "The Tuscan history," says Forsyth, "may be reduced to three periods—the Republic, the reigns of the Medici, and Leopold's alone. Of these three, perhaps the last fills the most important place in the eye of the nation. The reign of Leopold was philosophy working for the people; not the complicate philosophy of economists and constitution-makers, but rather good sense acting with good intentions, in dispelling prejudices, correcting abuses, and in improving the moral and physical condition of men."

This Leopold, so universally known and honoured as a wise reformer and legislator, began his reign as grand duke in the year 1770, and ended it in 1790, when he became emperor of Germany. His long rule in Tuscany was an unmingled blessing to the country. Never did sovereign prince bestow such pains in promoting the comfort and happiness of a people. He toiled especially to make the peasants all comfortable. The *good he did* remained after him. The envi-





rons of Florence owe much of their beauty to a race of farmers, who are far more industrious, intelligent, and generous than their neighbours gifted with the same sun and the same soil. They pass the year in a constant succession of hard labour and joviality. Careless of their own dress, these men take a pride in the bright silks and broad gold earrings which their wives and daughters wear on Sundays and all holidays. The latter assist them in the field and vineyard; for the farms, being too small to support servants, are tilled in the patriarchal style by the brothers, sisters, and children of the farmer. Leopold rendered commerce free in all its relations; he abolished all monopolies, and transferred the weight of taxation from grain and raw commodities to the materials of luxury. He opened the rivers, and secured their banks. Though born to a military government, and surrounded from his infancy with troops, he at once reduced the army, replacing the soldiers and the titled bodyguards by citizens; and these he embodied into four companies, not for his own protection, but as the police of the country. He



trusted his all to the affection of his people. The inquisition had never been very tyrannical or dreadful in Tuscany, but Leopold banished it altogether from his dominions. He reduced the multitude of idle festivals, and diminished the large number of convents and monasteries, some of which he entirely suppressed. He opened all the offices of government to candidates of every rank; he brought all men under the same law; he suppressed unnecessary courts; he simplified the course of justice; he instituted for Tuscany a brief, compact penal code—a code which abolished torture, mutilation of body, capital punishment, and the sequestration of land; yet, from its steady enforcement, rendered crimes rare, and murder almost unknown in Tuscany. He was the most cool, patient, and philosophical of reformers. All Leopold's reforms were gradual, measured, and connected, the one leading to another. Nothing was demolished at once, nor did any nuisance cease until better resources were opened to the persons who had lived by it. With him starvation or poverty did not *follow upon the abolition of offices.* The

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word "compensation," which was erased in the vocabulary of succeeding revolutionary reformers, was written in golden letters in Leopold's state dictionary. Hence old evils were redressed, without the infliction of new ones.

He often travelled, not for pleasure or display, but to know his people and their wants. He affected no disguise, but dressed in very plain clothes—often in a cloak the worse for wear; and he was frequently unknown by those with whom he conversed. Amusing anecdotes are told of these excursions, and of the heedless freedom with which he was addressed and his conduct criticised. He heard every person; he saw everything with his own eyes; he registered everything he saw. The information thus obtained he reduced into a system, which protected him from imposition, and relieved him from dependence on his ministers. Much that he did could hardly be imitated by the sovereign of a more extensive state, and could scarcely be attempted in a vast empire; but, within narrow limits like those of Tuscany, other rulers might follow his example. Time has



only confirmed the decision of his contemporaries, that Leopold was a patriot on the throne, and the best prince of his period. It is rare that a Tuscan burgher or peasant mentions his name without some endearing epithet, or some expression of affectionate reverence.

During the last general continental war, Tuscany, in common with every other part of Italy, suffered very severely. Her grand duke was expelled, the French remained uncontrolled masters of the country for many years, heavy war taxes were imposed, commerce was greatly injured, the conscription was established to swell the enormous armies of Napoleon Bonaparte, while statues, pictures, and innumerable treasures of art were carried away to Paris. In the royal gallery, vacant frames and unoccupied pedestals reminded the Florentines of the masterpieces of genius that were gone. On the downfall of Bonaparte, the French were taught what the Duke of Wellington called "a great moral lesson": these works of art were all restored to Florence, and the same restitution took *place at Rome, Dresden, Madrid; in short, in*



every city where there was a gallery that had been despoiled by the invaders.

In 1815 the archducal line was restored, to the infinite joy of the Florentines. Although there may be many things in it open to criticism, the government of Tuscany under these Austrian princes continued to be the most enlightened, the mildest, and best in Italy. The internal administration was admirable. The political storms and troubles which occasionally shook other parts of the Peninsula respected the frontiers of this happy state. Thus, industry flourished, and no interruptions to internal improvement occurred until the political insanity of the year 1848 threw all things into confusion, and retarded, for at least some years to come, the progress of the country. From 1815 down to the dark year we have just named, the "downfallers" of the Bonaparte period, the political exiles of Poland and Spain, found refuge in Tuscany; and after the convulsions to which the Peninsula was subjected in 1820-1, many Italians, driven from other states, were allowed to live unmolested at Florence. No man was molested for



his private political opinions. Many were tolerated, and treated with courtesy, who had been life-long enemies of the House of Austria. Even the press was to a very great extent a free one, as may be judged by the periodical publications, and many books printed and published in Florence and Leghorn between the years 1827 and 1847.

The city of Florence is charmingly situated among hills and mountains in the valley of the Arno, which river divides it into two unequal parts, the larger (which was the original city) being on the right, or northern bank. Its shape, though somewhat irregular here and there, may be called a pentagon. It is about six miles in circuit, is enclosed by walls, no longer of any use as a military defence, and has eight gates, six of which open to high roads leading to Arezzo, Sienna, Pisa, Pistoja, Bologna, and to Val-ombrosa. On the north and north-west, a fine plain is interposed between the town and the Apennines, which rise to the height of 3,000, and at some parts 4,000, feet above the level of the plain and river. The lower *ridges* of this grand chain of mountains are

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FIESOLE.



cultivated, or beautifully wooded; but the loftier ridges have rather a naked, barren appearance. To the north-east, the hill of Fiesole, though at some distance, seems almost to touch or overhang the city walls. It is precipitously steep, but an excellent road winds up to the summit. The front of it is cut into a gradation of narrow terraces, which are covered with vineyards, or cultivated as orchards or gardens, and faced and supported with loose stone walls, mostly covered with ivy and other creeping evergreens. The whole face of the hill is dotted with white villas and farm-houses, many of these being truly beautiful in themselves, and all of them charming from their situations. The eye of the stranger involuntarily turns to Fiesole every time he goes out in Florence, and, assuredly, it is the most beautiful object to be seen in this region of beauty. That part of the city which lies to the south, or on the left bank of the Arno, runs up the declivity of a rather steep hill, which is partly enclosed within the walls; the gardens of Boboli and the fort of Belvedere crown the *ridge* of the eminence, and impart a pleas-



ing variety to the view on that side. Five bridges across the Arno connect the two parts of the city; the Ponte Rubiconte, the Ponte Vecchio, the Ponte di Santa Trinità, and the Ponte alla Caraja, and a recent iron bridge called Ponte di San Leopoldo.



PONTE DI SANTA TRINITÀ.

Of these bridges, that of the Santa Trinità is, indeed, generally considered one of the most beautiful bridges in Europe; it is built almost entirely of marble, and consists of three elliptic arches, the largest and central




one having a noble span and a most graceful curve. It was erected by Ammanati, a celebrated sculptor and architect of Florence, to supply the place of an old bridge which had been carried away by a violent inundation in the year 1557. On this bridge are four marble statues, which represent the seasons, and produce a very happy effect. Spring is by Francavilla Fiamingo; Summer and Autumn, by Giovanni Caccini; and Winter, by Taddeo Landini. The bridge affords a charming prospect up and down the river, and is a delightful promenade in the cool of the evening after a hot summer's day. The Ponte Vecchio, or old bridge, is occupied on either side by shops (like our London Bridge in the olden times), and is roofed over from end to end. You walk through the avenue as through a narrow covered street, without seeing the river; although, indeed, in its arrangements it more resembles one of the long-roofed bazaars of Constantinople than a street. Most of the side shops are occupied by goldsmiths, silversmiths, jewellers, and embroiderers, who seem to work principally for the churches, the com



mon people, and the farmers and peasants of the neighbouring country. The wife of every decent peasant must have her gold ear-rings and a few other ornaments, which descend as heir-looms from generation to generation; and the poorest and meanest of the people will not wear these ornaments unless they be made of very pure gold. That metal which goes in England under the almost facetious name of "*jewellers' gold*," and which seems to be every year approaching nearer to *brass*, finds no favour in their eyes, but is held to be—what it really is—a sham. The Ponte Vecchio is a great place of popular resort, and one of the best parts of the city wherein to study the manners of the people. In the morning and evening we always found it thronged. In Florence, some work of art meets you whichever way you turn. Near the head of this bridge there is a marble statue of Ajax, generally called by the people Alexander the Great.


The quays of Florence, running along either bank of the Arno, bear a general resemblance to those at Paris, and quite put to shame the two sides of the Thames at London. The





Arno, artificially widened by means of dams below the town, is precisely of the same breadth as the river Seine at the Tuileries ; the bridges over it measuring, like the Pont Royal of Paris, 120 steps. Thus, where it traverses Florence, the classical Arno is of no mean breadth ; but it is only during a part of the year that its bed is well filled up with water. In the hot summer months the stream is much sunk, and broad sand-banks, encumbered with stones washed down by the torrents of autumn, winter, and spring, show themselves on either side, and not unfrequently in the middle of the bed. As there is always too much water or too little, and as the current is rapid, the Arno at Florence is not a river for boating, nor is it commercially of much use, except in floating down timber from the upper country.

In the central or more ancient part of Florence, which lies between the cathedral, the old market-place, the Palace of Government, and the river, the streets are mostly narrow and irregular, and many of the houses have rather a dilapidated appearance ; though *here and there* you find noble churches, and






massive square stone palaces, which look like fortresses, and which really served as such during the civil contentions of the republic. But the streets which lead from this central part to the present gates of the city, and which from their more recent date are still called Borghi or suburbs, are laid out on a regular plan: the outer part of the town, also, is handsomely built, the houses being interspersed with gardens, especially in the neighbourhood of the city walls. These walls were erected in the fourteenth century, when Florence had far outgrown its original dimensions. Traces of the old fortifications are found at considerable distances from each other within the present lines. All the streets are paved with fine large flat stones, over which carriages glide with the utmost ease. To prevent the horses from slipping, grooves are cut across these flags. Here, as in nearly every other city of Italy, great improvements have taken place since the peace of 1815; but the distinctive features of the place—the real glories of Florence—are all of ancient date, and intimately connected with the history of the middle ages.



faults in the several parts of these edifices, but the group will never cease to charm the unprejudiced and tasteful spectator. The Emperor Charles V. was so delighted with its delicacy, grace, and finished elegance, that he used to say that the Campanile ought to be kept under a glass case. It is reported of Napoleon Bonaparte, that when he first visited Florence, in his early Italian campaigns, he lingered a long time on this spot, and declared that the whole group was too delicately beautiful to be exposed to wind and weather. But the elements in reality only add to the beauty and softness of the building. At every hour of the day, and under every variety of atmosphere, church, tower, and chapel are delightful; but, perhaps, they are never seen to better advantage than by moonlight.

Let us enter the cathedral. The choir is directly under the cupola, and, like the cupola, is polygonal; it is enclosed and rather dark. "Here," says Forsyth, "is just that dim religious light which pleases poetical and devout minds." There are not now *many* pictures either in the nave or in the






choir. Among the more remarkable is a portrait of the immortal Dante executed by Orcagna, and honoured with a place in this cathedral by the very republic which had condemned him to death. After suffering him to die in exile at Ravenna, the Florentines would gladly have recovered the poet's bones ; but being baffled in their attempts, they voted that a cenotaph should be erected in the cathedral. Yet this vote remained an unfulfilled intention, and Orcagna's old picture is all that the Florentines can show in honour of the man who made their dialect the standard of Italy, and achieved in that dialect triumphs which no modern Italian, nor indeed any Italian since his time, can pretend to have equalled, or even to have approached. Close to this portrait of Dante there used to be one of Sir John Hawkwood, the English Condottiero, with a long inscription underneath, recording his fidelity and his valuable services to the Florentine republic. In the year 1848 (that year of trouble and revolution), we looked in vain for this portrait and inscription. We were told that they had been removed in the course of some



necessary repairs, but we are afraid that they have never been restored to their places. One does not willingly miss such memorial of a countryman in a foreign land. Forsyth, who has been followed without any inquiry as to the facts by other English writers, represents this gallant knight of the Black Prince as a foul traitor, and especially charges him with having betrayed the Pisans, in whose service he then was, to their enemies the Florentines. Now, the traitor on that occasion was a member of the old Pisan family of the Gambacorti, and Sir John Hawkwood was in the service, not of Pisa, but of Florence. The fame of so brave and able a soldier ought not to be thus trifled with. The cathedral contains the ashes of Giotto and Brunelleschi. There is a curious Latin epitaph to the painter, which may be thus translated:—"Nature having given me a correct and easy hand, I employed it in reviving the extinct art of painting. My skill knew no other bounds than those of nature: none painted more or better than I. Behold that stately tower, the Campanile, *from which* the consecrated bells summon



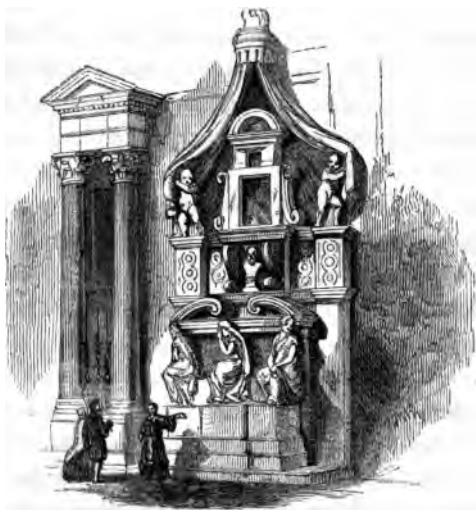


us to worship; it raised its aspiring head to the stars, according to a method invented by me. In short, I am Giotto: what can verse say more? He died in the year 1336, and his fellow-citizens, mindful of his merits, erected this to his memory." On the right hand, near the main entrance of the church, is a marble bust of Brunelleschi, with a Latin inscription to this effect:—"Of Philip Brunelleschi the architect's uncommon skill, the wonderful cupola of this church, and the great number of his mechanical inventions, are sufficient proofs; upon which account, and in consideration of his extraordinary merit, endowments, and virtues, his grateful country ordered his body to be interred in this sacred ground, May 15th, A.D. 1446." Among a few other interesting inscriptions, is an epitaph on one Antonio Squarcialupo, a musician and organist, who enraptured his contemporaries, and improved the art or science of music, to which, from the twelfth century downwards, the Florentines have been as much attached as to painting, sculpture, and architecture.

Externally it is of little worth, but inter-



nally the church of Santa Croce is more interesting than the Duomo, or than any other church in this city. On account of the number of its tombs of distinguished personages, and not from any resemblance (for there is not the slightest between the two buildings), Santa Croce has often been called the Westminster Abbey of Florence.



TOMB OF GALILEO.

*Here are the ashes and the tombs of*



Boccaccio, Macchiavelli, Galileo, Michael Angelo, Leonard Aretino, Alfieri, and other illustrious Tuscans or sojourners in Florence, who astonished the world with their literary, scientific, or artistic genius. Alfieri in his life-time was wont to walk up and down this church contemplating the marble monuments of his predecessors, or losing himself in thought and abstracted musings; and it was here that he first felt working within him the spirit of a poet, and the yearnings after an immortality of fame. His friend and (at last) wife, the fair and accomplished countess of Albany, widow of the unfortunate Prince Charles Edward, commonly called the Young Pretender, lies at a short distance, under the same roof, in a beautiful marble tomb, which bears an inscription written for her by the poet. According to tradition, Michael Angelo's tomb was by his own express desire so placed, that when the doors of the church were thrown open, the cupola of the Duomo or cathedral might be seen from it; as if, from the very grave, he would fondly gaze on the work he so ardently admired while living.



Macchiavelli's epitaph is an instance of that happy brevity which makes an epitaph impressive :—

“Tanto nomini nullum par elogium  
Nicolaus Macchiavelli.”

Louis Bonaparte, once king of Holland, father of the present emperor Louis Napoleon, lies interred in Santa Croce, with some other members of the Bonaparte family, who, after a life of great vicissitude, tranquilly ended their days in this quiet beautiful city on the Arno. The exterior of this celebrated church is rough and almost repulsive: the fact is, it has never been finished. When pope Leo X. sent Michael Angelo from Rome back to his native city, one of the commissions with which he was charged was to complete this church, and case it with marble; but the irritable genius, who never could work except in his own way, differed with the pope on the choice of the marble to be used, quarrelled with the officials, and scarcely accomplished anything. Santa Croce is not the only temple that remains in this state. Out of the one hundred and odd churches *and chapels* that exist in Florence, not above




half have ever been completed externally as well as internally. Burnet said that the unfinished churches looked as if they were *flayed*. The large square in front of the Santa Croce is a place of great resort during the Carnival. All this part of the city is called Villa Ghibellina; for the Ghibelline party mostly inhabited it, and they often made it the scene of their stern warfare with the Guelphs. In all the old parts of Florence, one is continually reminded of these sad dissensions, while we wonder how they could co-exist with so much refinement in art and in letters.

The church of Santa Maria Novella was so dear to Michael Angelo, that he was accustomed to call it his delight, his bride, his sposa. Here is the celebrated Madonna of Cimabue, in close company with numerous works of art, produced between the thirteenth and seventeenth centuries. The whole of the interior is solemn and impressive; and when not thronged, as at the hour of high mass, it is silent and favourable to meditation. Boccaccio frequented it and mused in it, and here he fixed the opening



scene of his "Decameron." The plague was raging in Florence, and the more prosperous of the citizens were preparing to retire into the country. A party of fair ladies, with this intention, met within the church. "In the venerable church of Santa Maria Novella, one Tuesday morning, there being scarcely any other person present, and service being performed in a lugubrious manner suited to such a season, there assembled seven young ladies, all connected by friendship, close neighbourhood, or relationship; and of these ladies not one was more than twenty-eight or less than eighteen years of age; and each was sage and circumspect, of noble blood, of beautiful form, adorned with elegant manners, and honestly gay and sprightly." It is to be regretted that these charming Florentines, when safe in their rural retreat, should be made to narrate or listen to tales which are offensive to good morals. But all the stories are not of this objectionable character; the purely interesting, the mournful and tragic, and the merely comic pieces, are more numerous *than the licentious ones*, and the "Deca-





meron " affords glimpses of Florentine life and manners in the fourteenth century, which are scarcely to be obtained anywhere else except in the old chroniclers,—Matteo Spinelli, Ricordano Malaspina, Matteo and Filippo Villani.

Attached to the church of Santa Maria Novella is a very spacious Dominican monastery, with several cloistered squares, one of which is a spacious, noble quadrangle. The walls in some of these cloisters are completely covered with curious old paintings in fresco. In the midst of one of the areas there is a fine statue of il Beato Giovanni, or John the Beatified, the founder of the house, whose arm is outstretched as if in the act of preaching or admonishing. The entire extent of this monastery is immense. Once it contained more than a hundred monks and lay-brothers; at present there are not above twenty-five in all, and these seem to have a very insecure tenure. The farmacia, or dispensary, where the Dominicans prepare not only medicines, but also choice perfumery and an exquisite liqueur called alchermes, contains a curious series of por-



traits of priors and chemists of the house, and other interesting pictures and works of art. The atmosphere is charged with the sweetest perfumes, all so happily mixed and blended together and amalgamated, that no one predominates; and although the concentrated scent is strong, it is not irritating to the nerves. The Dominicans sell their medicines, their perfumery, and liqueurs; and for centuries this trade has been one of the principal sources of their revenue. In 1847 they finished a splendid little sala, or hall of reception for distinguished visitors; it is one mass of carving, rich gilding, and mirror. We have never seen anything richer, or, in its way, more beautiful; but to us it seemed out of place here—it ought to be the boudoir of a queen or an empress. The monks would have done better if they had spent the money in restoring their cloisters or improving the exterior of their church. An inscription in Latin, Italian, French, and English, set up in the four corners of the sala, commemorates the work. In English it runs thus:—



IN ADDITION TO  
THE MAGNIFICENT MONUMENTS  
EXISTING IN SANTA MARIA NOVELLA,  
THIS,  
PERHAPS NOT THE LEAST,  
HAS BEEN ERECTED BY PRIAR DAMIANUS BENI, DRUGGIST,  
IN THE YEAR 1848.

Taking church and cloisters together, Santa Maria Novella is one of the most interesting places in all Italy, and is not to be known and duly appreciated without many and long visits. It contains within its walls, and in its own specimens, almost a history of the art of painting. In several of the cloisters, the frescoes are of the earliest date. The cloisters themselves are only less interesting than those of the Campo Santo at Pisa. In the church the Inferno or Hell of Orcagna, and the admirably outlined frescoes of Domencio Ghirlandajo, the master of Michael Angelo, merit quite as much attention as Cimabue's Madonna.

Between Santa Maria Novella and the cathedral stands the old church of San Lorenzo, an object of great interest, not so much for its own beauties, internal or external, as for the edifices united or connected



with it. These are the Sacristy, the Medicean Chapel, and the Laurentian Library. Parts of the church are of great antiquity. It was first consecrated in the year 393 : being injured by time and by a fire, the republic resolved to restore and enlarge it, and in 1425 Brunelleschi set his hand to the work. The Medici and other wealthy families constructed and decorated the twenty-four side chapels which are within the walls, and all covered with paintings, and adorned with sculptures. The Sacristy, frequently called *Capella de' Depositi*,—

“——That chamber of the dead,  
Where the gigantic shapes of Night and Day,  
Turn'd into stone, rest everlastingly”—

claims notice as Michael Angelo's first essay in architecture, and as the receptacle of some of the finest statues produced by that extraordinary and versatile genius, who was, all in one, sculptor, painter, poet, architect, and civil engineer. Two figures, representing Morning and Twilight, recline upon a sarcophagus containing the ashes of Lorenzo de' Medici ; and immediately opposite to these are two other recumbent figures,



representing Night and Day, upon another sarcophagus. Armed statues of Lorenzo and Giuliano de' Medici are in niches over these sarcophagi. The first of these two statues is, according to Rogers, the most real and unreal thing that ever came from the chisel.

“What from beneath this helm-like bonnet scowls?  
Is it a face, or but an eyeless skull?  
'Tis lost in shade; yet, like the basilisk,  
It fascinates and is intolerable.”

We believe that few persons can look at this mysterious statue, for any length of time, without becoming sensible of this painful fascination, or without dreaming afterwards of that shadowed face. But of these works of Michael Angelo, the figures of Night and Day are by far the most admirable, and these soothe instead of disquiet the beholder. “The attitude of Night,” says Bell, “is beautiful, mournful, and full of the most touching expression; the drooping head, the supporting hand, and the rich head-dress, are unrivalled in the arts. Day is little more than blocked, yet most magnificent; the noble effect is only heightened by what



is left to the imagination. Till I beheld them, I had no conception of the genius and taste possessed by this artist; they evince a grandeur and originality of thought, a boldness and freedom of design and execution unrivalled." A poet of the time having said of this statue of Night—"Though she sleeps, she lives: if thou doubtest, awake her, and thou wilt hear her speak;" Michael Angelo, himself an admirable poet, thus replied in the person of Night:—

"Grato m'è il sonno, e più l'esser di sasso.  
Mentre ch'è il danno e la vergogna dura,  
Non veder, non sentir m'è gran ventura.  
Però non mi destar; deh! parla basso."

"Grateful to me is sleep, and more grateful still to be of stone! While wrong and shameless deeds prevail, not to see, not to hear, is great good fortune. Therefore do not wake me: pray, speak low."

The contiguous Medicean chapel, commenced in 1604, is noble and chaste in its design. It was intended to be the mausoleum of all the members of the Medici family. If completed upon the plan upon which it was *begun*, it would surpass every sepulchral



building in the world. Its form is octagonal, its diameter 94, and its elevation to the vault 200 feet. It is literally lined in the interior, as far as it is yet finished, with lapis lazuli, agate, and other precious stones. It is finished with six massy sarcophagi of polished porphyry, and supported by granite pilasters with capitals of bronze. The sarcophagi contain the ashes of the first six grand dukes of Tuscany. A Crucifixion, a group in white marble by John of Bologna, a Virgin by Michael Angelo, and a St. John by one of his disciples, grace this dormitory of the dead, and preside over it with appropriate majesty. But before the magnificent monument intended for their reception generation after generation could be finished, the Medicean line had failed—the family had become utterly extinct. The work was suspended on account of its excessive costliness; and many of the materials which had been collected for the inlaid pavement, and for the mosaics of the cupola, were purloined or scattered during the troubles which followed the French invasion of Italy in 1796. Soon after his restoration, in 1815, the



grand duke Ferdinand III. resolved to complete the edifice. The works were again interrupted by his death, which happened in 1824; but his son, Leopold II., the present grand duke, soon followed in the footsteps of his father, and gave constant employment to a number of artists and skilful workmen, who were approaching the completion of their task, when the revolutionary mania of 1848 suspended all such operations, and for a time drove the duke and his family into exile. The debts contracted by the state during those troubles still press heavily upon the exchequer; but a few artists are still employed; and as so very much has been done, we may pretty safely deny the prediction so often made, that the splendid mausoleum of the Medici would never be finished. The Laurentian Library is above the cloisters of the convent annexed to the church of San Lorenzo. You ascend to it by a splendid staircase constructed after the designs of Michael Angelo. The library is an admirable hall, 143 feet long by 35 feet broad. It was *founded* by Clement VII., the second pope.




of the Medici family, to be the depository of the valuable manuscripts which his ancestors had collected from all parts of the world. A large number of them are Greek, while not a few are Oriental—Hebrew, Chaldean, or Arabic. They were turned to the best account by the great men of the Medici family, when they were making their strenuous efforts for the revival and diffusion of letters. In all, there are about 8,000 MSS. The oldest is a Virgil, which disputes the palm of antiquity with the celebrated Virgil of the Vatican library at Rome. The Greek and Latin classics are for the most part of the eleventh century; the writing is far more legible than that of the illuminated MSS. which followed in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The works usually shown as distinguished for their beauty,—such as the Pliny, the Homer, the Ptolemy, the Missal of the Republic,—all belong to the fifteenth century, are all richly illuminated, and contain portraits of the Medici in the initials and margins. The reigning grand duke has added to the library an apartment, destined to receive the first



printed editions of the classics, and other typographical rarities.

Of the churches of Florence we need say no more. One charm they possess in a manner almost peculiar to themselves, and this is an intimate connexion with the memory of the great men who flourished in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and who from Florence diffused the light of literature over the western world. There are few churches in this city which are not ennobled by the tombs of some or other of these personages; scarcely one that does not present to the eye, inscribed on marble or bronze, some illustrious, well-known name. The tombs of the learned Greeks who fled before the last and worst of barbarians, the Turks, and fixing themselves at Florence, established the seat of the Grecian Muses in Tuscany, awaken many a pleasing and many a melancholy recollection. The honours heaped on these illustrious but poor exiles by the first of the Medici and their spirited contemporaries, the enthusiasm of their numerous Tuscan disciples, and the *rapid propagation* of their language, delight






the imagination even at this distance of time, and do infinite credit to the taste and feelings of the Italians of that vivid, energetic era. But for Florence and the Medici, these refugees from Constantinople might have languished in poverty and obscurity, and all that they could teach to the nations of the West might have remained untaught. Neither France nor England possessed at the moment enlightenment, taste, generosity, and tranquillity enough, to afford asylum and patronage to the learned Greeks. Over the gateway of the frowning old palace they so long inhabited, the Medici set up a Latin inscription, inviting to their hospitality, not only princes and potentates, but all wise and erudite men.

Except in the more modern parts of the town, the palazze or principal houses of Florence have rather a heavy look—an appearance of gloomy strength. Their solid masonry, as we have mentioned, makes them more resemble castles fitted for the defence of feudal barons, than mansions adapted for the residence of wealthy merchants. Generally the whole basement story is forti-



fied with large, rugged bossages, which present always an imposing aspect, and sometimes afforded a defence very necessary to the nobility of a town for ever subject to insurrection. This harsh strength prevails only below ; the upper stories are, not unfrequently, even light. The first range of windows, which are ten feet from the ground, are grated and barred with massive bars of iron, such as we see in our prisons. The second floor front has usually a plain and very simple architrave. The windows are high and arched, placed at a considerable distance from each other, and varying from ten to fifteen in number, according to the extent of the front. The third story resembles the second in simplicity, and in the size of its windows. The roof is of a flat form, with a deep cornice and bold projecting soffits, which impart an air of grandeur to the whole edifice. A massive iron gate opens into the court, which is usually surrounded by a colonnade. The interior distribution accords with the length or front. One line of doors enfilades the *apartments*, and lays open the whole house ;






a plan rather incommodious for private life, but very proper for gala and show, and suited to a hot climate.

In every house the lower rooms are vaulted. The upper apartments are generally hung with silk, but rarely or never papered: in the other apartments, the walls are coated with stucco, which is frequently covered with fresco painting. Externally, most of the more modern palaces are faced with stucco, but not painted architecturally as at Genoa, or coloured as at Venice. Even the fastidious Forsyth admits that the doors and windows are admirably designed; and that being not crowded, but sparingly distributed, they give an air of solidity and grandeur to the wall. The Palazza Riccardi, the first abode of the learned Greeks, and the cradle of classical literature, was built by the great Cosmo de' Medici in 1430. It continued to be a residence of the Medici down to the year 1659, when the grand duke Ferdinand II. sold it to the Riccardi family. It afforded accommodation to pope Leo X., to Charles VIII. of France, and to the emperor Charles V., whose sleeping apartment is still shown.



In 1815 the grand duke purchased the palace from the proprietor who then held it, and it is now the property of Government. It is very imposing in its dimensions. It was originally designed by Brunelleschi, who created the cupola of the cathedral, and whose work is everywhere seen in this city; but Michael Angelo, Michelozzi, and other architects and sculptors, were subsequently employed upon the edifice. The beautiful windows on the ground-floor are Michael Angelo's. The medallions and bassi-relievi under the portico are by Donatello. Nearly every one of these Florentine palaces has a chapel of its own. The chapel of the Palazza Riccardi is enriched with paintings by the celebrated Benozzo Gozzoli, pupil of Fra Angelico. Benozzo is described as an excellent man, and a good and pious Christian. He had a lively sense of the beauty and variety of the external and material world. He introduced many figures, generally the portraits of many of his distinguished contemporaries, all in the costume of their own period. He was born in 1406, and died in 1478. *The best of his works are to be seen*





at Pisa. They are all interesting as memorials of the fifteenth century, and are nearly all of a very high order of art. The *Bibliotheca Ricciardiana* is in this palace; and here are held the meetings of the Academy Della Crusca, a literary society which for a long period enjoyed great celebrity. At a short distance from this palace is another public library, called *Bibliotheca Marucelliana*, founded by a Florentine patrician, and now containing about 50,000 printed books and many MSS. The stables of the Riccardi palace occupy the site of the house of Lorenzino de' Medici, the assassin of his relative, duke Alexander.

The *Bibliotheca Magliabechiana*, another public library, founded by the celebrated Antonio Magliabechi, whose knowledge of books and marvellous memory are proverbial, stands in another part of the town. The collection of books and manuscripts has been greatly increased of late years by the grand duke. In all these Florentine libraries the stranger finds easy admittance, accommodation, and civility.

But the most stern and imposing of all




the palaces in Florence is the Palazzo Vecchio, or Old Palace, which stands on an open square called la Piazza del Gran Duca. It was erected in 1298 by order of the Florentine republic, under the direction of Arnolfo di Lapo, who could not give the building a regular form, as some of the people who occupied houses in the square would not sell them, or on any account allow them to be touched.

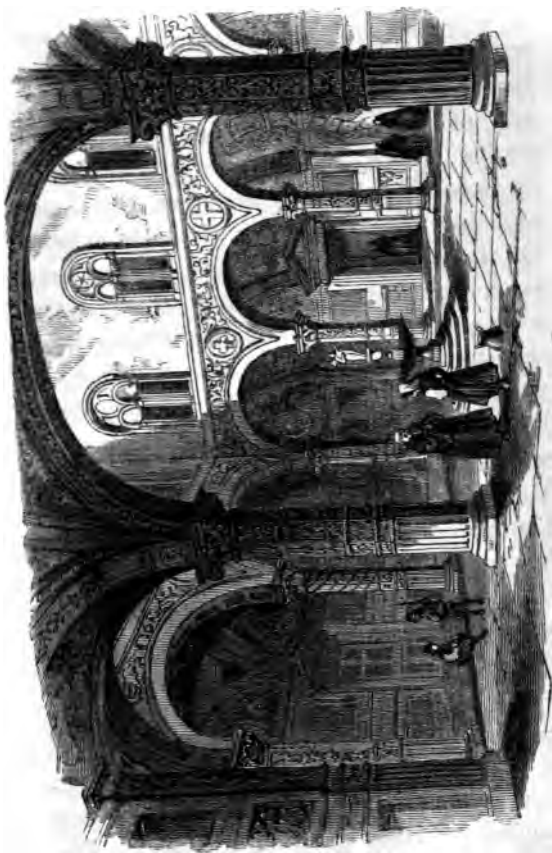
The palace underwent several repairs and enlargements, but it was left as we now see it in the year 1350. Its walls, built of immensely large stones, look as if they would defy time till time shall be no more. On approaching the palazza, the object which first strikes the eye is a huge tower projecting out of the building, which tower in one part of its elevation is broader than at its base, but soon returns to its proper symmetry. This tower is very lofty, and contains an old and curious bell with a great clock, which was set up in the course of the fourteenth century, but greatly improved in the year 1669 by Balatrie, who *invented the ingenious mechanism*, by means



of which the hours marked on the dial are seen as clearly at midnight as at noon-day. By the entrance of this palace, one on each side of the grand gate, are two colossal marble groups, one Hercules killing Cacus, by Baccio Bandimelli; the other, David triumphing over Goliath, by Michael Angelo. On the right hand side of the gate formerly stood a tribune or pulpit, from which, in the days of the republic, the magistrates were accustomed to harangue the people. It would not be easy to count how many revolutions began or ended within these stern walls, or in the palazzo in front of them. Here was the Palace of Government, the high palace and chief seat of the republic; but the Medici resided there many years after they attained to the dignity and absolute authority of grand dukes. On the first floor of the palace there is a grand hall, called the Hall of Council, which is 172 feet in length by 74 in breadth. On the ceiling and walls of this immense room, the most remarkable achievements of the republic are painted in fresco by Giorgio Vasari. The four angles are filled up with as many large







COURT OF THE OLD PALACE.




pieces painted in oil, one of which represents the coronation of Cosmo I. by pope Pius V. All these works are by old artists of great fame. The hall is further enriched with exquisite sculpture: here are statues of Cosmo I., duke Alexander, and popes Leo X. and Clement VII., who were both of the house of Medici. Not far from these is a most admirable statue of Victory, with a prisoner at her feet, the work of Michael Angelo, who originally intended it for the monument of that very warlike pope, old Julius II. Here, also, are some exquisite marble groups by Vincenzo Rosa, representing six of the exploits of Hercules. Unluckily this grand hall is rather dark and gloomy, the windows being small and not well arranged. In all parts of the palace, from the quadrangular courtyard to the summit of the lofty tower, some object of interest is to be found in architecture, sculpture, or painting. The old Florentines indulged in a profusion, a lavishness of objects of art, which makes all the palaces and other interiors of modern Europe look wonderfully mean and parsimonious. As we know from original documents,



as well as from history and biography, the state very liberally paid the artists they employed, and always looked out for the most eminent painters and sculptors, the sums annually expended must have been immense. The square in front of this palace (Palazza del Gran Duca) is certainly unequalled by any other square or palazzo in Europe, if we take into account all the works of art it contains. We do not preter to mention them all. On one side is a loggia or arcade, called la Loggia de' Lanzi, behind which the troops who formed the guard for the palace were placed in former times. This magnificent arcade or portico was constructed in 1355 by Orcagna. Not thinking it sufficient in itself, the Medici placed under its exterior arches three superb groups. The first, in bronze, representing Judith cutting off the head of Holofernes, is by Donatello; the second, also in bronze, representing Perseus with Medusa's head, is by Benvenuto Cellini, and reputed the greatest work of that extraordinary genius; the third, said to be cut out of one block of marble, representing a young warlike Roman carrying a



a Sabine virgin, is by Giovanni di Bologna, who must ever take his stand among the greatest of sculptors. In the midst of the square, nearly facing the grand gate of the palace, is a magnificent fountain, designed by Ammanati, in the time of Cosmo I. Here the figure of Neptune, which occupies the centre, is rather more than eighteen feet high. The gods and the other figures which surround the fountain are all larger than the size of life, and of exquisite workmanship. Near the fountain is a bronze equestrian statue, placed here in 1594, by the grand duke Ferdinand I. in honour of his father Cosmo I. The statue is another admirable work by Giovanni di Bologna. On the sides of the pedestals are bassi-relievi and Latin inscriptions of commendable brevity. The largest is the following, which can scarcely be accused of exaggeration:—  
“In honour of Cosmo de’ Medici, first grand duke of Tuscany, the pious, fortunate, brave, just, and merciful, who by successes in war procured a happy peace to his dominions, the best of fathers, and the best of princes, his son Ferdinand erected this statue.”





But the great object of attraction in Florence is the Museum or Gallery, which is rather a series of galleries than one single range. In no other building is there so rich a collection of works of art, ancient and modern. The Medici, while as yet private merchants, began the collection; and the descendants, as sovereign princes, continued to augment it, with wonderful zeal and good taste. Even in their degeneracy, this remarkable family never lost their critical judgment and love of art; and the very last of the race, the insignificant grand duke Gaston, made splendid donations to the gallery. But Florence seems to have inspired all its rulers with a love of art. The grand dukes of the Austrian line have all contributed to the Museum, and have all taken the warmest interest in the preservation and proper keeping of the treasures here accumulated. Francis I. drew up with his own hand a series of laws for the preservation of the Gallery and its riches, and he purchased for it a vast number of antique medals, coins, and bronzes. The grand duke Leopold made immense additions in medals, statues, bronzes, pairs



ings, and Etruscan vases. To this prince the Gallery is indebted for the Niobe, the portraits of the famous old painters, and some of the finest of its pictures. To make room for these, Leopold very properly turned out some paltry things which had been kept there merely as curiosities. The now reigning grand duke, Leopold II., has presented a most interesting series of vases and other Etruscan works, discovered not long ago in the territory of Chinsi, and amounting nearly to 800 pieces. He has also constructed new cabinets to contain these and other additions; while out of his own privy purse he has purchased various marbles, ancient and modern, a vast number of medals, and a choice collection of Egyptian monuments.

On entering the vestibule of this most noble Museum, your eye first rests on the founders themselves. Here you may contemplate the features of Cosmo, "the father of his country," and of Lorenzo "the Magnificent." Some of their busts are of porphyry. It is said that the art of carving in porphyry was lost, and that one of the Medici restored it. The gallery itself runs round the whole



of the Venuses and Graces of Canova, and all the modern sculptures we have seen, have a sharp, dazzling, garish effect on the eye, which detracts materially from their beauty. The Apollino, the Arratino, the Wrestlers, and the Faun, are the four satellites which surround the presiding divinity of the Tribune. These are all ancient Greek works, and each of them is perfect in its way. Between the attraction of its antique statues and its Italian pictures, a whole day might be fully employed in this one apartment of the Museum.

The group of the Niobe gives name to the cabinet in which it is placed. This group—if such a term may include not only the central figures, but also those placed at equal distances round a room—consists of sixteen statues, of various sizes and very unequal merit, and, as it is thought, by different hands. We very much doubt whether some of the figures have any business to be here, or have anything whatever to do with the story of Niobe and her woes. But Niobe herself, clasped by the arm of *her terrified child*—her youngest and best



beloved—is certainly a group, and one in which the contrast of passion, of beauty, and even of dress, is admirable. The agony of maternal affection has never been so forcibly and so touchingly displayed. The figure of the mother is as sublime as it is pathetic. There is no inscribed name; there is nothing to indicate to us which of the great sculptors of ancient Greece was the author of this wonderful group. Among other works in this chamber of the Niobe is a head of Alexander the Great—a head, indeed, worthy of the son of Ammon and the conqueror of the world. The mingled beauty and majesty in the countenance of this hero is found on all his coins and medals.

Among all the modern statues which grace this collection, there is nothing worthy to be compared with the bronze Mercury of Giovanni di Bologna. The nimble god is represented as standing on one leg, upborne by the breath of a zephyr. “It is a figure of ethereal lightness—the veritable son of Maia—and might bestride the gossamer that idles in the wanton summer air.”\* There

\* Matthews.



are two pieces of sculpture by Michael Angelo; but one was the production of his boyhood, and the other proceeded from him when his wondrous powers were as yet immature.

The Gallery is not less rich in painting than in sculpture. The Tribune, wherein stands the Medicean Venus, contains one of the most celebrated pictures ever painted by Titian, and exhibits a specimen of each of the three different styles of Raphael. Here, among other works of that great master, are the St. John in the Wilderness, the portrait of Julius II., and the well-known portrait of the Fornarina. The portrait of the old, warlike, ambitious, and care-worn pope, is in every way a wonderful performance: the colouring, after the lapse of 300 years, is as fresh as if it had been painted yesterday. Michael Angelo, (as a painter,) Andrea del Sarto, Guido, Domenichino, Annibal Caracci, Leonardo da Vinci, Corregio, and Parmegianino—the highest names in Italian art—contribute to the inappreciable wealth of this glorious Tribune, *which* does not contain one single work that

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would not by itself alone confer dignity and value on any royal or imperial collection. In the ante-rooms of the Tribune, amidst an almost endless variety of paintings, are a few bold romantic sketches by Salvator Rosa, and the famous Medusa's Head by Da Vinci. Of the different series of portraits contained in the Gallery, one of the most interesting is that of the great painters of the three last centuries, all executed by their own hands. Those of Rubens, Vandyke, Rembrandt, and Guido, are among the more esteemed. The portrait of Raphael seems to have been painted while he was yet very young. The countenance is beautiful—almost effeminately so ; but, as a painting, the work is inferior to the portraits just named.

In one of the cabinets, among a wonderfully rich collection of vases, in terra cotta and marble, is the celebrated Medicean vase (marble), representing the sacrifice of Iphigenia, and being, for its form, its size, and sculpture, the finest vase in existence. Another cabinet near the Tribune is filled with costly and fanciful works in precious



stones. "Here are heads and figures of Roman emperors and catholic saints, of princely sinners and pious popes of the house of Medici, who have hats of jet, faces of agate, eyes of opal, coats and petticoats of lapis lazuli, legs of jasper, and shoes of porphyry. The eye is dazzled with a profusion of crystal vases; with candlesticks and crucifixes composed of gems of every colour; with diminutive columns and mimic temples; goblets that might serve for the banquets of gods, cups fit for fairies, and jewels worthy the eye of an emperor."\*

If you descend from the Gallery, pass the quay, cross that curious antiquated bridge, the Ponte Vecchio, and enter the northern part of the town, a short walk will bring you to the Palazzo Pitti, where another world of art awaits you. This extensive edifice, now the residence of the grand dukes, was built in the year 1440 for Luca Pitti, a wealthy citizen and magistrate of Florence. As the Pitti family met with reverses of fortune, the grandson of Luca sold the palace in 1549 to Eleonora of

\* *"Rome in the Nineteenth Century."*



Toledo, the wife of duke Cosmo de' Medici, for the sum of 9,000 golden florins. Forthwith the palace was enlarged, and in the following year it became the residence of the grand duke and his court. Other additions were made from time to time, but the last grand design has never been completed, and the Palazzo Pitti still wants a wing. It appears very frequently to have happened that the conceptions and designs of the splendid Tuscans were too great and expensive for their finances or means of execution. As usual, the lower part of the Pitti palace is stern, solid, and imposing; but the building offers many lighter graces, and not a few ingenious contrivances for communication and comfort. The Boboli gardens in the rear are very extensive, and in parts exceedingly beautiful: they stretch over undulating ground, and ascend considerable hills, which afford the most delightful prospects of the Arno, the city on its two banks, the heights of Fiesole, and the surrounding country. To the citizens of Florence and the people of the neighbouring country, the Boboli gardens are thrown open nearly every day



from morning till night: a foreign traveller can obtain access to them daily, and at nearly every hour, provided it be not dark. Near to the palace the grounds are laid out in that artificial style which we have now abandoned in England, but which, nevertheless, assorts well and harmonizes with architecture; and in these parts statues, marble vases, and beautiful fountains, are mingled with trees, shrubs, and flowers. In every respect the Pitti palace is a right royal dwelling. The interior of the edifice presents what the French call "an embarrassment of riches." In nearly every part, walls and roofs are covered with fresco paintings by the best masters. In different apartments are disposed about 500 paintings in oil; and these are all choice pieces, being, with a very few exceptions, of the *highest* order of merit. The greater part of these precious treasures were collected by the Medici, but very considerable additions have been made by the grand dukes of the house of Austria. Master-pieces of Raphael, Titian, Tintoretto, Pietro de Cortona, Guido, Guercino, *Paul Veronese*, Andrea del' Sarto, Baroccio,



Salvator Rosa, Spagnolletto, and many others of the greatest painters, are found here beautifully arranged, and exhibited in the best lights. In England, partly owing to our climate, and partly in consequence of our ill-judged architecture, similar treasures of art are not unfrequently almost invisible. At Florence, as at Rome, every picture, every statue, seems to have the light which best suits it, and to be always exhibited to the very best advantage. With extreme liberality, the reigning grand duke throws open this invaluable collection to the public six days in the week, from nine o'clock in the morning until three in the afternoon. The greatest courtesy and all necessary accommodation are afforded to artists who wish to copy or minutely study any of the pictures. The general good taste of the Florentines must have been promoted and educated by this easy access to the refined, the beautiful, and the grand in art.

One wing of the Pitti palace contains, in 28 rooms or cabinets, the private library of the grand duke, consisting of more than 64,000 volumes of printed books, and 1,500



volumes of manuscripts. Among the Italian manuscripts which deserve most notice are a collection of autograph letters, written on various subjects by Macchiavei and another collection of notes and letters written by Galileo. This library has been considerably augmented by Leopold II., the reigning sovereign. The celebrated Magliabecchi library, which was formerly here, has been removed to a building on the other side of the water, near the grand gallery, and has been liberally thrown open to the public every day except Sundays and Church festivals. Every one has heard or read stories of the extraordinary memory of old Magliabecchi, who knew every work that had been printed or circulated in manuscript, and who, in an immense collection, could immediately lay his hand on any book that was mentioned. He lived entirely among books, and was the dirtiest as well as the greatest of all book-worms. The volumes which he more frequently consulted bore the marks of snuff, which he took to excess; and others, which he used for plates, were daubed with yolks of eggs.



his principal food. His nails were so long that he was compared to a harpy. He had such a distaste for clean linen, or the trouble of changing, that when a shirt was put on, it usually remained as long as it would hang upon his back. As he lived in this sordid manner, and hardly ever washed himself, it is no wonder that the pleasure and instruction of his society and conversation were not in great request among the Florentines. Though he had many rivals in that line, if a list were to be published of learned slovens and slovens of genius, Magliabecchi would undoubtedly be entitled to the first place among them. He died in the year 1714.

The Gabinetto Fisici, or Museum of Physical Sciences and Natural History, though much frequented by all classes of people and by both sexes, contains many objects to excite disgust, and which ought to be frequented only by professional men. It was first founded by the grand dukes of the Medici family, but it has been greatly enlarged in more recent times. The Museum is rich in fossils, corals, shells, and insects; but it owes its celebrity principally to imita-



tions of dead bodies and dissected subjects in wax. Here all that is revolting in disease, deformity, and decay, lies exposed with a nakedness which ought to be visible only to the eye of science. Zumbo, a Sicilian, is said to have been the first to apply wax to the purposes of imitative anatomy. Among those of his work preserved in this Museum, is a miniature representation of the commencement and progress of the fatal plague of Florence; and from the effect produced by this diminutive performance, we may imagine that, had it been as large as life, it would have been too revolting for exhibition. Here we behold "the decomposition of bodies through every stage of putrefaction—the blackening, the swelling, the bursting of the trunk—the worm, the rat, and the tarantula at work—and the mushroom springing fresh out of the midst of corruption."\* Fontana, who flourished at the end of the last century, assisted by various artists skilled in wax modelling, completed the anatomical collection as it now stands. In many respects the minuteness of the work is aston-

\* Forsyth.



ishing: they show one body which consists of 10,000 separable pieces. But as we proceed among these elaborate imitations of mortality and disease, objects more revolting even than the plague of Zumbo present themselves, and warn us to retire. In another apartment they show a much more agreeable object—the telescope of the great Galileo.

Florence is well furnished with hospitals and other charitable foundations. Architecturally considered, the hospitals of the Innocenti, Santa Maria Nuova, Arbatello, and San Giovanni, are conspicuous ornaments to the city. The foundations of all of them date from the time of the republic. Santa Maria Nuova was founded in 1287, by Foleo Portinari, father of the fair Beatrice, immortalized in the verses of Dante. To each hospital is attached a church, decorated as usual with painting and sculpture. The Istituto della Santissima Annunciata is a magnificent establishment, in which 800 poor girls are boarded and instructed, and provided for when they leave the house. As in nearly all the Italian cities, there are Confraternité, or associations of charitable



Goths, who must needs leave on the walls their obscure names and the dates of their visits.

Among the wealthy and fashionable class morals are pretty much on a par with those prevailing in other Italian cities, only there is perhaps more outward decorum maintained in Florence. Among these classes fortunes are moderate, and mostly derived from landed property. In various respects, the constant resort of English nobility and gentry to the city has produced beneficial effects. The Florentine signori are certainly less soft and effeminate than they used to be; many of them now ride on horseback, instead of lolling in easy carriages, and manfully partake in the sports of the field, instead of sitting under fig-trees, on wicker stools, to shoot beccaficas. The system of conventual education, and the arbitrary and business-like manner in which marriages are arranged, tell unfavourably on the domestic virtues of the ladies. Among the Tuscan nobility, however, are to be found many instances of pure morality in the affairs of life, and many *individuals* distinguished for their learning



and accomplishments, and for the liberality with which they exert themselves in promoting useful and charitable institutions and works of public utility.

Upon the whole, Florence is one of the pleasantest places of residence in all Italy. The price of apartments and provisions is moderate, the country extremely fine, and the climate generally healthy. It is subject, however, to fogs in autumn, and to rather severe cold in winter. By those who seek a warmer climate on account of health, or at least by such of them as suffer from pulmonary affections, Florence had better be avoided from the end of September to the beginning of May. In the intermediate months, the city is exposed to the cold winds and blasts from the Apennines, which sweep down the valley of the Arno with pernicious effect. When they blow with all their strength, it is difficult to face them; and the beautiful quays along the river, where the principal hotels are situated, are then anything but pleasant promenades or abiding places. The whole neighbourhood of Florence, for miles and miles, is thickly studded







with villas, neat farm-houses, country houses, orchards, and gardens. This made the poet Ariosto say, that if they were all collected within the walls, or joined to the city, it would take more than two Romes to make one Florence.

The walks and rides are numerous, varied, and delightful. The fashionable promenade called *le Cascine* is on the right bank of the Arno, and at a very short distance from the south-eastern suburb of the city. Without being much like either, it partakes of the mixed character of our Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens. A very extensive tract, running along the bank of the river, is laid out in wood, copse, and shady avenues. The roads and paths among the cool trees are nicely varied, of great length, and kept in admirable order. In the fine evenings they are thronged with pedestrians, open carriages, and gentlemen and ladies riding on horseback. Of late years the company have very much the air and outward appearance of the frequenters of our London parks.

A pleasant easy walk of about two miles leads from Florence to the celebrated Cer-



tosa, an abbey which resembles a Gothic fortress. It was founded in 1341, by Acciaiuoli, "for God's greater glory." Some idea may be formed of the extent of the buildings, from the fact that a French regiment was quartered within them without



CONVENT OF VALLOMBROSA.

dislodging a single monk or lay brother. Of the beautiful hill of Fiesole we have already spoken. In addition to the enchanting views *it* affords, it offers in itself many objects of *very great* interest—as the Cyclopæan walls



of the ancient city, the venerable cathedral, first founded in 1208, the house of Galial, &c. There are, at least, twenty other delightful walks in different directions. Among the most interesting excursions to be made from Florence, are those to Pietra Mala, Pratolino, Vallombrosa, the abbey of Camaldoli, and the convent of Laverna. Pietra Mala is a mountain that rises in the middle of the Apennines, on the road to Bologna. It is rendered very remarkable by a flame that spreads over a small part of its surface, and burns almost continually, without producing any of those destructive effects which accompany volcanic action. Pratolino is one of the most celebrated of the many villas which belong to the grand duke. It is less remarkable for its architecture than for its groves, its fountains, and a colossal statue, representing the genius of the Apennines, so huge that it may be seen at the distance of many miles. On the summit of a neighbouring mount stand the towers of an ancient convent, founded, or rather restored and enlarged, by a noble Florentine, who obtained the title of Saint, by devoting his


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time, means, and abilities, to the propagation of peace, forgiveness of injuries, and charity in his country, then desolated by the bloody contests of the Guelphs and Ghibellines. Vallombrosa (the Shady Valley) is immortalized in the verses of Milton, who is believed to have had the scenery in his eye or memory, when he wrote his description of the terrestrial paradise. It is situated in the heart of the Apennines, among stupendous scenery. Its abbey, whose wealth and beauty, whose devotion and courtesy to all comers, are celebrated by Ariosto, was founded about the middle of the eleventh century by a nobleman of Florence, who, having embraced the monastic life in a Benedictine monastery in that city, and having refused the dignity of abbot, withdrew, from a love of solitude, to these wilds. A few humble cells rapidly grew into an extensive and splendid edifice. It was here that Hugford, a monk of English extraction, revived the art of Scagliuola. This art had been confined to the imitation of inanimate objects, until his improvements *gave it the light and shade necessary to*



landscape and the human figure. The Camaldoli stands on the bank of a torrent, that rushes through a valley surrounded by some of the loftiest peaks of the Apennines. It consists of a series of detached buildings, two or three of which date from the ninth century. The loftiest part, called the Eremo, is a town of hermits, walled round, and divided into streets of low, detached cells, each cell consisting of two or three small rooms, very bare of furniture. From this point there is a most romantic ride, through forests and over mountains, to Laverna, a most singular convent, perched on the very peak of a lofty Apennine, and said to have been built by St. Francis himself. The scenery and surrounding objects are of the terrific kind: a rocky mountain, a ruin of the elements, rent, broken asunder, and piled in sublime confusion—precipices fringed with old, gloomy, visionary woods—black chasms in the rock down which curiosity shudders to look—gloomy caverns, with huge crosses—long, excavated galleries, and stairs that restore you to daylight.





The upper region of these Apennines is thickly wooded. The beech is indigenous on their tops, and the oak on their sides. The chestnut-tree and the fir were originally planted here by man. These forests belong to the convents of Camaldoli and Vallombrosa, and to the cathedral of Florence. Immense rafts are floated down the Arno by the winter floods, and chiefly consigned to the seaport of Leghorn, connected with the Arno by means of a canal.

THE END.















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